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THE LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY

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THE CENTENARY

LIFE OF WESLEY.

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BY

EDITH C. KENYON,

AUTHOR OF

"FORESTALLED; OR, THE NEW FABRIC OF STONEFIELD MILLS,"

"THE OLD VIOLIN," ETC.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

JOHN WESLEY'S EARLY HOME 1

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE; JOHN WESLEY'S ANCESTRY . . . 11

CHAPTER III.

JOHN WESLEY'S MOTHER 18

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN AND CHARLES AT SCHOOL 32

CHAPTER V.

AT OXFORD 36

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING FOR HOLY ORDERS 43

CHAPTER VII.

FELLOW OF LINCOLN 57

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII.

CURATE OF WROOTE 66

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY CLUB 71

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF THE RECTOR OF EPWORTH 85

CHAPTER XI.

PROPOSAL TO GO OUT TO GEORGIA 97

CHAPTER XII.

ON BOARD SHIP 105

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AMERICA 115

CHAPTER XIV.

DISAPPOINTING EXPERIENCES 125

CHAPTER XV.

WESLEY'S RETURN TO ENGLAND 135

CHAPTER XVI.

WESLEY'S CONVERSION 147

CHAPTER XVII.

WESLEY'S ECCENTRICITIES 157

CHAPTER XVIII.

WESLEY IN GERMANY 166

CHAPTER XIX.

PAGE
IN LONDON AGAIN 177

CHAPTER XX.

FIELD PREACHING 186

CHAPTER XXI.

STRANGE SCENES 196

CHAPTER XXII.

OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION 207

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEATH OF SAMUEL WESLEY 216

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEPARATION FROM THE MORAVIANS 224

CHAPTER XXV.

SEPARATION FROM WHITEFIELD 241

CHAPTER XXVI.

LAY-PREACHING 259

CHAPTER XXVII.

WESLEY VISITS NEWCASTLE AND EPWORTH . . . 267

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PERSECUTIONS, MOBS, AND RIOTS 279

CHAPTER XXIX.

PREACHING IN CORNWALL 292

PAGE

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE 301

CHAPTER XXXI.

LAST SERMON BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY . . . 308

CHAPTER XXXII.

ITINERATING 314

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WESLEY'S IDEA OF A PRESBYTER 326

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FURTHER LABOURS 336

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SAD CHAPTER 346

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WESLEY IN MIDDLE AGE 351

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO OF WESLEY'S HELPERS AND FRIENDS . . . 362

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WESLEY'S ORDINATIONS 374

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WESLEY'S LAST DAYS 382

CHAPTER XL.

WESLEY'S DEATH 396

PREFACE.

THE attention of every Christian in the English-speaking world will probably be drawn, sooner or later, during this Centenary Year of John Wesley, to the life of the remarkable man whom Churchmen and Non-conformists—those who still call themselves after his name, and those who do not—combine to praise for his zeal, faith, power, and the great work which he did for the cause of true heartfelt religion.

Several memoirs of Wesley have been written, but, in adding to their number, we do so in the hope that the present one may meet a want which the Centenary Year will create.

E. C. KENYON.

BRADFORD,
1891.

LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN WESLEY'S EARLY HOME.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the reign of Queen Anne, a very sad state of things prevailed in England. Mobs and riots were by no means uncommon; the people were ignorant and irreligious; Churchmen and Nonconformists alike bore testimony to the wretched condition of religion and morals. The writings of Infidels—amongst others, Hobbes, Tindal, Chubb, and Collins, and, later, Bolingbroke, Hume, and Gibbon—were eagerly read by the people, and the clergy were themselves frequently unlettered men, sunk in sloth and little respected by those to whom they ministered. Bishop Burnet wrote—"I cannot look on without the deepest concern, when I see the imminent ruin hanging over this Church, and, by consequence, over the whole Reformation. The outward state of things is black enough, God knows; but that which heightens my fears rises chiefly from the inward state into which we are unhappily fallen. . . . Our Ember-weeks are the burden and grief of my life. The much greater part of those who come to be ordained are ignorant to a degree not to be apprehended by those who are not obliged to know it. The easiest part of knowledge is that to which they are the greatest strangers . . . those who have read some few books, yet never seem to have read the Scriptures. . . . This does often

tear my heart. The case is not much better in many who, having got into orders, come for institution, and cannot make it appear that they have read the Scriptures, or any one good book, since they were ordained; so that the small measure of knowledge upon which they got into holy orders, not being improved, is in a fair way to be quite lost; and then they think it a great hardship if they are told they must know the Scriptures and the body of divinity better before they can be entrusted with the care of souls."

Southey too spoke of them thus, "The clergy had lost that authority which may always command at least the appearance of respect; and they had lost that respect also by which the place of authority may sometimes so much more worthily be supplied." In the great majority of the clergy zeal was wanting. The excellent Leighton spoke of the Church as a fair carcase without a spirit. Burnet observes that, in his time, our clergy had less authority and were under more contempt, than those of any other Church in Europe; for they were very much the most remiss in their labours and the least severe in their lives. It was not that their lives were scandalous; he entirely acquitted them of any such imputation; but they were not exemplary, as it became them to be; and, in the sincerity and grief of a pious and reflecting mind, he pronounced that they would never regain the influence which they had lost, till they lived better and laboured more.

And Archbishop Secker said, "In this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age. . . . Such are the dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and the profligate intemperance and fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal."

If this was the state of affairs in the main in England, what, we ask, must it have been in remote and isolated country

districts, where the people were even less civilised and more lawless than the dwellers in more thickly populated parts of the kingdom?

Matters were bad enough, at all events, in Epworth, a market-town of about 2000 inhabitants in that portion of the county of Lincolnshire known as the Isle of Axholme, a strip of land lying west of the Trent, and enclosed between that river and two others—viz., the Don and Idle. The land had been drained by a Dutchman, Cornelius Vermuyden, to whom a third of it was granted, whereupon he sold shares to his countrymen, and some of them left Holland and settled on their allotments. The Fenmen, as the original dwellers on the island were called, were, however, opposed to the drainage, and refused to receive compensation for their right of pasturage on the redeemed land. Hence arose fierce riots and angry litigation, lasting for more than half a century, in which the pre-eminence in ferocity must be assigned to the Fenmen. They burnt the crops of their opponents, killed their cattle, and sometimes their workmen laid the whole level under water in the hope of drowning the inhabitants, and, at last, attempted to burn the house of the most obnoxious of their adversaries, Nathaniel Reading, with all its inhabitants, the doors having been locked, and the keyholes stopped up with clay. That was in the year 1697, when the Rev. Samuel Wesley was endowed with the living of Epworth, and removed there with his wife and children.

Mr. Wesley was a scholarly man, who had for many years supplemented his very scanty stipend of £50 by literary work. He wrote poem after poem, *The Life of Christ*, and *The History of the Old and New Testaments;* but his most valuable publication was a Latin dissertation on the Book of Job, which evinced profound learning, and won him the approval of some noted men of his day. Pope wrote to Swift of him—"I call him what he is, a learned man, and I engage you will approve his prose more than you formerly

did his poetry." His wife Susanna was young, very pretty, and fairly well educated—as education went in those days. The living of Epworth was worth £200 a year, and the Rectory must have seemed a palace as compared with the wretched dwelling the poor clergyman and his wife had lived in at South Ormsby. It was a three-storied and five-gabled timber and plaster house, thatched with straw, and containing seven or eight rooms and offices.

But the pleasure of the new Rector and his wife in coming to this living must have been greatly marred when they discovered the wild and lawless character of the Epworth people.

Southey said, "Mr. Wesley found his parishioners in a profligate state; and the zeal with which he discharged his duty in admonishing them of their sins excited a spirit of diabolical hatred in those whom it failed to reclaim. Some of these wretches twice attempted to set his house on fire, without success; the third time they succeeded,"—but of that more anon.

Nothing daunted by these signs of vindictive hatred, the worthy Rector plied faithfully his parish labours. He certainly was an exception to the lazy clergy of whom mention has been made. He knew all his parishioners, and visited them from house to house, keeping a record of his visits. His preaching was pointed, and he spoke out boldly, even when it gave offence. Bad livers in the parish resented it, as they did also his party politics, and showed their resentment by wounding his cattle at night, cutting off the legs of his house-dog, breaking his doors, and, as we have said, by setting fire to his house. Many of them vexed him not a little about the tithes, and at one time they would pay only in kind. Mr. Wesley had a large and increasing family, and want at times pressed heavily upon his home. Poetry and literature would not avail to provide all that was required, if he did not receive what was his due. We can therefore understand that he had sometimes

to leave his books and defend his rights, and we can well believe the following anecdote of him.

One day, "going into the field where the tithe corn was laid, he discovered a person cutting the ears with a pair of shears, and filling with them a bag brought for the purpose. Without saying a word, he seized the astonished parishioner by the arm, and led him into the market-place of the town, where he opened the bag, turned it inside out before the multitude, and declaring what the pilferer had done, walked quietly away, leaving him confounded before his neighbours."

Doubtless it was sometimes his imprudent political zeal as well as his godly admonitions which enraged his parishioners against him, but the persecution that he underwent was very grievous. At one time, under the pretext of a small debt, which he could not at the moment discharge, he was arrested while leaving his church, and imprisoned in Lincoln Castle, where he continued about three months. But his native spirit did not fail him. "Now I am at rest," he wrote to the Archbishop of York from his prison, "for I am come to the haven where I have long expected to be; and," he characteristically added, "I don't despair of doing good here, and it may be more in this new parish than in my old one." He became, therefore, a volunteer chaplain to his fellow-prisoners, and read prayers daily, and preached on Sundays to them. He was consoled by the fortitude of his noble wife. "'Tis not every one," he wrote again to the Archbishop, "who could bear these things; but I bless God my wife is less concerned with suffering them than I am in writing, or than I believe your Grace will be in reading them." When he went to prison he said, in another letter, he had only about ten shillings, and his wife, who had scarcely as much at home, sent him her rings, because she had nothing else of value to send; the good man, however, was able to return them. When Mr. Wesley was advised to leave Epworth on account of his persecutions, he replied bravely—

"'Tis like a coward to desert my post because the enemy fires thick upon me. They have only wounded me yet, and I believe cannot kill me."

Such was the father of John Wesley; and into his frugal home at Epworth was the child born, on the 17th June 1703, who was to cause such a decided change for good in the spiritual life of Englishmen both in his own and in following generations. John was the second living son, and he was probably a delicate child, for he was baptised by his father when only a few hours old. He received the names of John Benjamin, after two baby boys (the tenth and eleventh children) who had preceded him and died in infancy. But his second name was never used; in his home he was simply Jack or Jacky, and he always signed himself plain John.

In his infancy his life was endangered by the barbarity of the lawless people of the place, who, as we have said, were at last successful in their attempt to burn down the Rectory. His mother thus graphically relates the incident:—

"On Wednesday night, February the 9th, 1709, between the hours of eleven and twelve, some sparks fell from the roof of our house upon one of the children's (Kitty's) feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us. Mr. Wesley, hearing a cry of fire in the street, started up (as I was very ill, he was in a separate room from me) and, opening his door, found the fire was in his own house. He immediately came to my room and bade me and my two eldest daughters rise quickly and shift for ourselves. Then he ran and burst open the nursery door and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones lay in the bed with her; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest and bade the rest follow, which the three elder did. When we were got into the hall, and were surrounded with flames, Mr. Wesley found he had left the keys of the doors above stairs. He ran up and recovered them a minute before the staircase took fire. When we opened the street door the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with

JOHN WESLEY'S BIRTHPLACE

such violence that none could stand against them. But some of our children got out through the windows, the rest through a little door into the garden. I was not able to climb up to the windows; neither could I get to the garden door. I endeavoured three times to force my way through the street door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress I besought our blessed Saviour for help, and then waded through the fire, which did me no further harm than a little scorching my hands and my face.

"When Mr. Wesley had seen the other children safe, he heard the child in the nursery cry. He attempted to go up the stairs, but they were all on fire, and would not bear his weight. Finding it impossible to give any help, he kneeled down in the hall and recommended the soul of the child to God."

John Wesley himself afterwards continued the relation of his escape — for *he* was the child — in the following words:—

"I believe it was just at that time I waked; for I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up; but none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no farther, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed up on a chest which stood near the window. One in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, 'There will be no time; but I have thought of another expedient. Here, I will fix myself against the wall; lift a light man and set him on my shoulders.' They did so, and he took me out of the window. Just then the whole roof fell; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was he cried out, 'Come, neighbours, let us kneel down; let us give thanks

THE RESCUE.

to God! He has given me all my eight children; let the house go, I am rich enough.'

"The next day, as he was walking in the garden and surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which just these words were legible: '*Vade; vende omnia quæ habes, et attolle crucem et sequere me*' (Go sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross and follow me)."

In this fire most of Mr. Wesley's manuscripts were destroyed, but a few small mementoes of the terrible calamity were preserved, among others a hymn with music adapted. It is the only entire hymn written by the father of the Wesleys that finds a place in the Wesleyan hymn-book:—

"Behold the Saviour of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree;
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for thee!

Hark! how he groans, while nature shakes,
And earth's strong pillars bend:
The temple's veil in sunder breaks,
The solid marbles rend!"

John Wesley never forgot his deliverance from such a terrible death. The scene of the burning house is commemorated under one of his portraits, with the words, "IS NOT THIS A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING?" And he made frequent allusion to the saying in his writings, and when in his fiftieth year, he believed himself to be dying, he chose those words for his epitaph. To his mature imagination, we are told, all mankind was typified in his own remembered peril—peril only the greater from their own unconsciousness of it; his work was to imitate his own deliverer, and snatch slumbering souls from their state of exceeding danger.

CHAPTER II.

RETROSPECTIVE; JOHN WESLEY'S ANCESTRY.

THOSE who care for the study of heredity will be much interested in tracing the family history of the man who became the chief agent in a religious, and, if we may use the term, spiritual revolution of a most extraordinary and potential nature.

John Wesley was emphatically of a good family in the sense in which he would himself have used the expression. His great-grandfather, Bartholomew Wesley, studied medicine as well as divinity at the University, and when he was ejected by the Act of Uniformity from the living of Allington, in Dorsetshire, the medical knowledge which he had acquired from motives of charity became then the means of his support. He is said to have been the fanatical minister of Charmouth, Dorsetshire, who had nearly caused Lord Wilmot and Charles II. to be delivered to their enemies, but about this there is a little difference of opinion. His son John was educated at New Inn Hall, Oxford, in the time of the Commonwealth, and was noted for his cleverness in the acquisition of Oriental tongues, as well as for his piety and diligence, and attracted the notice of the then vice-chancellor, John Owen, "a man," says Southey, "whom the Calvinistic dissenters still regard as the greatest of their Divines." If the Government had continued in the Cromwell family, the patronage of Owen would have led Bartholomew Wesley to distinction; as it was, he obtained the living of Blandford in his own county, and was ejected from it for nonconformity. He had, in fact, never been ordained.

At the Restoration he had scruples against the use of the

Common Prayer, and was cited before the Bishop of Bristol for his irregularities. The prelate told him that if he continued to preach it must be "according to order, the order of the Church of England, upon ordination."

"What," he replied, "does your Lordship mean by an ordination? If you mean that sending spoken of in Romans x., I had it."

"I mean that," replied the Bishop. "What mission had you? You must have it, according to law and the order of the Church of England."

"I am not satisfied in my spirit of that," said the other. "I am not satisfied in conscience touching the ordination you speak of." And then he proceeded to vindicate his preaching by its good results, the approval of good men, and his entire devotion to it.

"I am glad I heard this from your own mouth," said the good Bishop. "You will stand to your principles, you say?"

"I intend it, through the grace of God, and to be faithful to the king's majesty, however you deal with me."

"I will not meddle with you," said the Bishop.

"Farewell to you, sir," was Mr. Wesley's only answer.

"Farewell, good Mr. Wesley," responded his lordship.[1]

Here was "a kind of epitome of Methodism," says Clarke. "He was a lazy preacher, and he was an itinerant evangelist." The good impression he made upon the Bishop of Bristol could not save him from imprisonment soon after. Four times was he imprisoned, once for half a year, and again for six months. The evil days and the loss of precious friends broke the poor man's heart, and he died at the early age of three or four and thirty. So bitter, we are told, was the spirit of the age, that the Vicar of the village of Preston, where he died, would not allow his body to be buried in the church. Bartholomew, his father, was living then, but the loss of this

[1] *History of Methodism*, by Abel Stevens, LL.D.

his only son, under such grievous circumstances, brought his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

John Wesley married a woman of good family, the niece of

JOHN WESLEY AND THE BISHOP.

Fuller, the Church historian, a man "not more remarkable for wit and quaintness than for the felicity with which he clothed fine thoughts in beautiful language.[1] He left two

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley.*

sons, of whom Samuel, the younger, was only eight or nine years old at the time of his father's death. The circumstances of his father's life and sufferings, which have given him a place among the confessors of the Nonconformists, were likely to influence the opinions of the son, but, happening to fall in with bigoted and ferocious men, he saw the worst side of the dissenting character." Their defence of the execution of King Charles offended him, and being shocked and disgusted at some of their proceedings he separated from them, and because of their intolerance joined the Church which had persecuted his father, and continued throughout life a zealous Churchman.

It is most interesting to note how the final severance with his party came about. The young Samuel was designed for the ministry of the Nonconformists, and, trained by so many domestic examples to sympathise with their cause, he had been appointed to prepare a reply to some severe invectives which had been published against them. In attempting the task "he conceived that he saw reason to change his opinions."

The step of leaving his father's party, and consequently his friends, plunged the young man, who was then about twenty-one, into poverty, but, having great self-reliance, he walked to Oxford, entered himself at Exeter College as a "poor scholar," and began his studies, with the modest sum of £2 and a few shillings in hand, and no prospect of any future supplies. From that time until he graduated a single crown was all the assistance he received from his friends. The ways in which he earned money were various; he taught all who were desirous of learning from him, he composed exercises for those who had more money than learning, and he wrote much for the publishers, and was, as we have seen, a tolerably successful writer of verse.

We have but few glimpses of his Oxford life; they show however the genuine Wesleyan character. He was laborious,

devout, and diligent in visiting the poor, and also the unhappy prisoners in the Castle, and relieving their necessities as well as ministering to their souls. Years later, when his sons became notorious at Oxford for similar labours, he wrote to them—"Go on in God's name, in the path into which your Saviour has directed you, and that wherein your father has gone before you." But, like his sons, the liberal man was also economical, and when he left Oxford for London he had more than £10 in his pocket.

Dunton, his London publisher, having married a daughter of Dr. Annesley, an eminent Nonconformist divine, introduced his young friend to the family, where he found his future wife in the youngest daughter, Susanna.

Dr. Annesley was of aristocratic lineage. His father and the Earl of Anglesea of that date were first cousins, their fathers being brothers. Samuel Annesley was an only child, and received the Christian name that has been handed down to so many of his descendants at the request of a saintly grandmother, who died before he was born. His mother too was an eminently pious woman, and as she lost her husband when Samuel was four years old, she brought up the boy, who entered at Queen's College, Oxford, at the age of fifteen, and in due course took his M.A. degree. Susanna's mother was his second wife, and the girl was one of a large family.

In one respect Susanna's experience was singularly like that of Samuel Wesley's, for she too had early chosen to leave the Nonconformist fold, of which her father was a distinguished preacher, and join the Church of England. Years later, in a letter to her son Samuel, she informs him that she has been drawing up an account of her leaving the Dissenters at the early age of *thirteen*, giving "the main of the controversy between them and the Church as far as it had then come to her knowledge."

When Dr. Annesley's youngest daughter thus deserted the

cause of the Nonconformists, her father seems to have uttered no reproach, nor did he prevent her exercising her liberty of conscience. Possibly he sympathised with her, and, at any rate, she was his favourite child to the end of his life, and it was to her care he committed the family papers (which unfortunately were destroyed many years afterwards in the fire which wrecked the parsonage at Epworth).

Susanna was only nineteen years of age when she married, and was six years younger than Samuel. The young man was then a curate in London, with an income of £30, which he doubled by his pen. But Susanna was clever and economical, and for two years they contrived to live in London lodgings—where their eldest son Samuel was born—and keep out of debt. Then the Marquis of Normanby heard of the young divine and his straightened circumstances, and used his influence with the Massingberds to procure him the living of South Ormsby. £50 a year, a house to live in (though a very poor one), and abundant leisure in which to write—for the pastoral work was by no means onerous—must have been a pleasant change from the London curacy. The new incumbent was eight-and-twenty, his wife twenty-two, and their babe only four months old, when they left London for their new home in the country.

As months and years went on, Mrs. Wesley was much distressed to observe that, although healthy and intelligent, her eldest boy made no attempt to speak. The parents feared that he was dumb, but their minds were set at rest about that one day, when he was between four and five years old. The little fellow was very fond of the cat, and would carry it about, and often disappear with it into quiet corners, and it happened that day that he had been so long absent that his mother grew uneasy. She hunted all over for her child, and at last heard a voice saying, "Here am I, mother," proceeding from beneath the table. Stooping down, the mother saw Sammy and his cat, and from that time the little boy spoke as well as

other children. Perhaps the fact that he had been the object of so much solicitude as well as natural fondness for her first-born caused Samuel always to be his mother's favourite.

It was just before the Wesleys left South Ormsby for their new living of Epworth that Mrs. Wesley had the grief of losing her father, who died after five months' illness, on the last day of 1696. Speaking of this, Mrs. Clarke says in her interesting life of Susanna Wesley, "She was a strong believer in communion between the spirits of the departed and those dear to them who are still in the body, and throughout the remainder of her life loved to think that her father was far nearer to her than while she was in Lincolnshire, and he in the flesh in Spital Yard."

CHAPTER III.

JOHN WESLEY'S MOTHER.

In regard to Mrs. Wesley's personal appearance, Mr. Hyde says, "Her portrait taken at about twenty-five—about five years after her marriage—gives a face that one cannot choose but admire. It has an air of high breeding, but there is a touching simplicity, a liveliness and a sweetness beaming over all." One writer, looking upon this picture and remembering what virtues adorned the fair original, and how, after the toils and struggles of three-score years and ten, her soul and her face were still full of light and sweetness, is not ashamed to vent his feeling in tears. "Such a woman, take her for all in all, I have not heard of, I have not read of, nor with her equal have I been acquainted." He almost thinks that Solomon saw her from afar, and took from her the portrait of the perfect woman! Studying her character, and thinking of the noble women later risen during a century and a half, he finds himself still saying, "Thou excellest them all."

Mrs. Wesley had nineteen children in the course of twenty-one years, and of these children ten lived to be adults. As we have seen, the family removed to Epworth in 1697, and most likely it was then that the young mother of eight children began working hard to obtain for them an education. It was plain that she must teach the girls herself, with the assistance of her husband, and the boys would have to be carefully prepared for the public school, which was considered a *sine quâ non* for them. So the mother began to keep school; and for six hours every day during about twenty years, often in ill-health, she was her children's untiring instructor.

"A careful student of nature," says Mr. Daniel, "has said, 'When God sets out to make a great man He first makes a great woman.'" Certainly Mrs. Wesley's sons were greatly blessed in having such a mother. Her system of education impressed them with so much admiration, that in later years she wrote a letter to her son John, in which, at his request, she gave him an elaborate account of her method of instruction.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will and bring them to an obedient temper," she said; "to inform the understanding is a work of time, and must with children proceed by slow degrees, as they are able to bear it, but the subjecting the will is a thing that must be done at once, and the sooner the better, for by neglecting timely correction they will contract a stubbornness and obstinacy which are hardly ever after conquered, and never without using such severity as would be as painful to me as to the child. In the esteem of the world they pass for kind and indulgent whom I call cruel parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must be afterwards broken. When a child is corrected it must be conquered, and this will be no hard thing to do if it be not grown headstrong by too hard indulgence." We are glad to find Mrs. Wesley adds—"When the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should be overlooked and taken no notice of, and others mildly reproved; but no *wilful* transgression ought ever to be forgiven children without chastisement less or more, as the nature and circumstances of the case may require. I insist on the conquering of the will of children betimes, because this is the only strong and rational foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual." . . . And again, "I cannot yet dismiss the subject. As self-will is

the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children ensures their after wretchedness and irreligion; whatever checks and mortifies, it promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident if we further consider that religion is nothing else than doing the will of God and not our own; that the one great impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone, so that the parent who studies to subdue it in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul."

For the rest, the children were taught as soon as they could speak to say their prayers every morning and evening, and to keep the Sabbath. "They were quickly made to understand they might have nothing they cried for"; and they were taught to speak courteously even to the lowest servant. Of course bad words were never heard among them, nor was such a thing as loud talking or playing allowed.

The wise mother, also, observing that cowardice and fear of punishment often led children to tell lies, made a law that "whoever was charged with a fault of which they were guilty, if they would ingenuously confess it and promise to amend, should not be beaten." Mrs. Wesley here hints that "one of the family," presumably Mr. Wesley, "could not be brought to observe this rule, so that the salutary arrangement was a little hindered, and he was often imposed upon by 'false colours and equivocations.'" Another wise rule was that if a child had committed a fault and then had done better, it should never be upbraided with it. Again, every signal act of obedience, especially when it crossed a child's own inclinations, was to be commended and frequently rewarded. And, once more, "If ever any child performed an act of obedience, or did anything with an intention to please, though the performance was not well, yet the obedience and intention should be kindly

accepted, and the child with sweetness directed how to do better for the future."

The children were strictly taught to respect "the rights of property," and were not permitted to take as much as the value of a pin from one another without leave. "This rule," said Mrs. Wesley, "can never be too much inculcated on the minds of children; and from the want of parents and governors doing it as they ought proceeds that shameful neglect of justice which we may observe in the world."

Two more matters the worthy mother insisted upon; one was that promises should be strictly kept, and the other that no girl should be taught to work till she could read very well. "This rule also is much to be observed," she said, "for the putting children to learn sewing before they can read perfectly is the very reason why so few women can read fit to be heard, and never to be well understood."

In the matter of teaching the children to read, Mrs. Wesley had a method of her own. She would not begin to teach a child even the alphabet until it was five years old, rightly judging that until that age the little brain had enough to exercise it with the varying problems of existence as they were revealed to it. And then, she took her pupil and devoted the whole six hours of the first day's tuition to the task of teaching it the alphabet. This was generally completely learned during that time, and then the pupil was nearly always able to read well in the short space of a quarter of a year. The youngest daughter, Kezia, was the only exception to this rule; she "picked up her letters" before she was five, to the mother's regret, who quaintly observed it was none of her doing, but "reading must have been in the atmosphere." Kezzy, too, she informed her son, was the only one who did not acquire the art of reading well in a quarter of a year.

Mrs. Wesley's patience in teaching was one day witnessed by her husband, who had the curiosity to sit by and count

while she repeated the same thing to one child more than twenty times. "I wonder at your patience," said he; "you have told that child twenty times that same thing."

"If I had satisfied myself by mentioning it only nineteen times," she answered, "I should have lost all my labour. It was the twentieth time that crowned it."

All this was admirable, especially when we remember how frequently ill-health confined the mother to her couch—sometimes for months together—from which the instruction must still have gone on. But some parts of the Wesleyan code sound a little stern. When turned a year old her children were taught to fear the rod, and to cry softly, "by which means that odious noise, the crying of children, was rarely heard in the house;" while none of the children were allowed to call each other by their proper names without the addition of brother or sister.

But, as one writer (Wedgewood) says, we see in the mother's punctual, orderly rule a distinct germ of the whole Methodist discipline, with all its excellencies, and only some of its faults. John and Charles owed much to their mother, and she was revered by them as she deserved to be. John gave it as one of the causes which had deterred him from matrimony, that he never could expect to see any woman who equalled his mother.

With John she took particular pains, and felt the deepest interest in him, because of his singular and providential escape when their home was burnt down. In a private note she said, in reference to this, that she considered herself "under special obligation, to be more particularly careful of the soul of a child whom God had so mercifully provided for." He was very young when she used to take him apart once a week to talk to him on religious subjects. Indeed, it was her custom to do this with all her children, and she has left it on record—"On Monday I talked with Molly, on Tuesday with Hetty,

Wednesday with Nancy, Thursday with Jacky, Friday with Patty, Saturday with Charles, and with Emilia and Sukey together on Sunday."

John Wesley showed what the influence of these Thursday interviews with her had been when, twenty years after he had left the old home, he wrote thus: "In many things you have

MRS. SUSANNA WESLEY.

interceded for me and prevailed. Who knows but in this too" (a complete renunciation of the world), "you may be successful. If you can spare me only that part of Thursday evening which you formerly bestowed on me in another manner, I doubt not it would be as useful now for correcting my heart as it was in forming my judgment."

That he must have been early visited by deep religious impressions may be inferred by the fact that his father allowed him to partake of the Lord's Supper at the age of eight.

At times poverty pressed hard upon the family. When the living of Epworth came to Mr. Wesley there came also many expenses in making the house habitable and in removing there: £150 had to be borrowed, and this debt, and paying the interest on it, hung like a mill-stone round his neck during the remainder of his life. Then, after the parsonage had been burned down, a new and equally commodious residence had to be built; for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners must be satisfied, and there was no insurance company to assist. Altogether the new parsonage is said to have cost £400, and if kind friends had not come forward from time to time with liberal assistance, Mr. Wesley could not have maintained his family.

Archbishop Sharpe was a most kind and faithful friend, and one day he said—it was when Mr. Wesley was in prison for debt—"Tell me, Mrs. Wesley, whether you ever really wanted bread?"

"My Lord," said she, "I will freely own to your Grace that, strictly speaking, I never did want bread; but then I had so much care to get it before it was eaten, and to pay for it after, as has often made it very unpleasant to me. And I think to have bread on such terms is the next degree of wretchedness to having none at all."

"You are certainly right," replied the Archbishop, and the next morning he sent her a handsome present.

Mr. Wesley appreciated the prelate's kindness on this and on many other occasions, and in a letter to him showed his heart was overflowing with gratitude.

"When I received your Grace's first letter," he wrote, "I thanked God upon my knees for it, and have done the same, I believe, twenty times since, as often as I have read it; and

more than once for the other which I received yesterday." And again, "I am pretty confident your Grace neither reflects on nor imagines how much you have done for me, nor what sums I have received by your lordship's bounty and favour, without which I had been ere this mouldy in a jail, and sunk a thousand fathoms below nothing." He then names over the

EPWORTH PARSONAGE (AS IT IS).

sums he had received through the Archbishop, £184, in which was included £43 from Queen Anne. "A frightful sum," he adds; "but it is beyond thanks, and I must never expect to perform that as I ought till in another world, where, if I get first into the harbour, I hope none will be before me in welcoming your lordship into everlasting habitations, where

you will be no more tried with my follies, nor concerned with my misfortunes."

No doubt Mr. Wesley greatly added to his expenses by his visits to London, for the purpose of attending Convocation, which kept him away from his home for several months together, and necessitated his keeping a curate at a stipend of £30 a year, though probably when the small living of Wroote —for which at most he only received £50 a year—was given him in addition to Epworth, the same curate was able to do the clerical work of both parishes.

It was during one of these long absences from home that Mrs. Wesley began to hold a service in her kitchen on Sunday evenings (when there was no service in the church), at first for the benefit of her own children and servants, and, later, for others of the parishioners who also begged permission to attend. The curate, Mr. Inman, was not liked, and the people complained that they did not derive that benefit from his preaching which they had been wont to receive from Mr. Wesley's. On the other hand, they found the expositions of the wise and pious Rector's "lady" were extremely edifying, and so they came themselves and told their friends, until at last as many as two hundred assembled together, while numbers had to go away because there was not even standing room.

John was a little boy of eight years old when he sat in this congregation, listening to his mother's reading and exhorting, and feeling no doubt deeply impressed by the solemnity of the scene. It has been thought that as the numbers increased the meeting must have adjourned to some barn or other roomy out-building, for certainly more are said to have come than the Rectory kitchen could contain. Be that as it might, however, there was one person who was not pleased with the meetings. Mr. Inman wrote to the Rector complaining of his wife's proceedings, and this induced Mr. Wesley to write and remonstrate with her. Upon which she replied—

"EPWORTH, *February 6th*, 1712.

"I heartily thank you for dealing so plainly and faithfully with me in a matter of no common concern. The main of your objections against our Sunday evening meetings are, first, that it will look particular; secondly, my sex; and lastly, your being at present in a public station and character; to all which I shall answer briefly.

"As to its looking particular, I grant it does; and so does almost everything that is serious, or that may any way advance the glory of God, or the salvation of souls, if it be performed out of a pulpit, or in the way of common conversation; because in our corrupt age the utmost care and diligence have been used to banish all discourse of God or spiritual concerns out of society, as if religion were never to appear out of the closet, and we were to be ashamed of nothing so much as of professing ourselves to be Christians.

"To your second, I reply that as I am a woman, so I am also a mistress of a large family. And though the superior charge of the souls contained in it lies upon you, as head of the family, and as their minister, yet in your absence I cannot but look upon every soul you leave under my care as a talent committed to me, under a trust, by the great Lord of all the families of Heaven and earth. And if I am unfaithful to Him, or to you, in neglecting to improve these talents, how shall I answer unto Him when he shall command me to render an account of my stewardship?

"As these and other such like thoughts made me at first take a more than ordinary care of the souls of my children and servants; so, knowing that our most holy religion requires a strict observation of the Lord's day, and not thinking that we fully answered the end of the institution by only going to church, but that likewise we were obliged to fill up the intermediate spaces of that sacred time by other acts of piety and devotion, I thought it my duty to spend some part of the day

in reading to and instructing my family, especially in your absence, when having no afternoon service we have so much leisure for such exercises; and such time I esteemed spent in a way more acceptable to God than if I had retired to my own private devotions.

"This was the beginning of my present practice; other people coming in and joining us was purely accidental. Our lad told his parents—they first desired to be admitted; then others who heard of it begged leave also; so our company increased to about thirty, and seldom exceeded forty last winter; and why it increased since I leave you to judge, after you have read what follows.

"Soon after you went to London, Emily found in your study the account of the Danish missionaries, which, having never seen, I ordered her to read it to me. I was never, I think, more affected with anything than with the relation of their travels; and was exceeding pleased with the noble design they were engaged in. Their labours refreshed my soul beyond measure; and I could not forbear spending good part of that evening in praising and adoring the divine goodness for inspiring those good men with such an ardent zeal for His glory, that they were willing to hazard their lives, and all that is esteemed dear to men in this world, to advance the honour of their master, Jesus. For several days I could think or speak of little else. At last it came into my mind, though I am not a man nor a minister of the gospel, and so cannot be employed in such a worthy employment as they were, yet if my heart were sincerely devoted to God, and if I were inspired with a true zeal for His glory, and did really desire the salvation of souls, I might do somewhat more than I do."

Mrs. Wesley went on to say that she resolved to pray more for the people, and to devote more time individually with each of her children, and with the neighbours who came in she spoke more freely and affectionately, and was more zealous than ever in choosing the best sermons she could get to

read on Sunday evening, and in prolonging the time of the services.

"Last Sunday," said she, "I believe we had two hundred, and yet many went away for want of room."

But Mrs. Wesley, though zealous, was also humble, and she went on to say—

"But I never durst positively presume to hope that God would make use of me as an instrument in doing good; the furthest I ever durst go was, It may be, who can tell? With God all things are possible. I will resign myself to him; or, as Herbert better expresses it—

> "'Only since God doth often make
> Of *lowly matter* for *high uses* meet,
> I throw me at His feet.
> There will I lie until my Maker seek
> For some *mean stuff*, whereon to show His skill;
> Then is *my* time.'

"And thus I rested without passing any reflection on myself, or forming any judgment about the success or event of this undertaking.

"Your third objection I leave to be answered by your own judgment. We meet not on any worldly design. We banish all temporal concerns from our society; none is suffered to mingle any discourse about them with our reading or singing; we keep close to the business of the day, and as soon as it is over they all go home. . . . Therefore why any should reflect on you, let your station be what it will, because your wife endeavours to draw people to the church, and to restrain them, by reading and other persuasions, from their profanation of God's most holy day, I cannot conceive. But if any should be so mad as to do it, I wish you would not regard it. For my part, I value no censure on that account. . . .

"As for your proposal of letting some other person read, alas! you do not consider what a people these are. I do not

think one man among them could read a sermon without spelling a good part of it; and how would that edify the rest? Nor has any of our family a voice strong enough to be heard by such a number of people.

"But there is one thing about which I am most dissatisfied; that is their being present at family prayers. I do not speak of any concern I am under, barely because so many are present, for those who have the honour of speaking to the great and holy God need not be ashamed to speak before the whole world; but because of my sex, I doubt if it be proper for me to present the prayers of the people to God.

"Last Sunday I fain would have dismissed them before prayers, but they begged so earnestly to stay I durst not deny them."

But, as Mr. Inman persisted in his complaints, and asked the Rector to stop his wife's meetings, Mr. Wesley wrote again on the matter. His letter does not seem to have been preserved, but his wife again writes to defend her work, urging that it brought many people to church who otherwise would not have come, and worked many other reforms. Finally she says—

"If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have given so much of these letters, because they show what an earnest, high-souled woman the mother of the Wesleys was, and how truly Christian were her thoughts and actions. Hers was no religion which rested content with the saving of her own soul, or even her children's. No, she cared for all for whom Christ died, and the influence of

her precepts and example must have helped largely to fill her sons with their ardent missionary zeal.

It does not appear that Mr. Wesley forbade the meetings, and, though we find nothing more recorded about them, they were probably continued until his return to Epworth, when, of course, as he was considered the best preacher in the neighbourhood, the necesssity for them no longer existed.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN AND CHARLES AT SCHOOL.

VERY little is told us about John Wesley's boyhood. He seems to have been very fond of arguing, for we find that his elder brother, Samuel Wesley, said to him when he was quite young—

"Child, you think to carry everything by dint of argument, but you will find by-and-by how little is ever done in the world by clear reason."[1]

When John had reached man's estate he endorsed this opinion, adding, "It is true of almost all men, except so far as we are taught of God,

> "'Against experience we believe;
> We argue against demonstration;
> Pleased while our reason we deceive,
> And set our judgment by our passion.'

Passion and prejudice govern the world, only under the name of reason. It is our part, by religion and reason joined, to counteract them all we can."

His father used to say: "As for Jack, he will have a reason for everything he is to do. I suppose he would not do anything unless he had a reason for it."

At nine years of age John had the small-pox, and is reported to have borne it bravely. At eleven, after having been carefully prepared for it by his parents, he was sent, through the kind services of the Duke of Buckingham, to the Charter-house School in London. This school was originally built for a monastery. In 1611 it was sold at auction for thirteen

[1] *Anecdotes of the Wesleys*, by Rev. J. Wakely.

thousand pounds to Thomas Sutton, Esq., one of the richest merchants of the day, who established the present institution, for which he obtained a charter from King James I. Its objects were the education of the young and support for the aged. In this school forty-four boys are gratuitously fed, clothed, and instructed in the classics. They must be between the ages of ten and fifteen years, and can remain only eight years. Amongst those illustrious men who were educated here were the highly-cultured essayists Addison and Steele, and the great legal commentator, Sir William Blackstone, Isaac Barrow, and John Wesley.

Mr. Southey says—"John suffered at the Charter-house under the tyranny which the elder boys were permitted to exercise. This evil at one time existed very generally in English schools, through the culpable negligence of the masters, and perhaps may still continue to exist; though if a system were designed for cultivating the worst dispositions of human nature, it could not more effectually answer the purpose. The boys of the higher forms of the Charter-house were then in the practice of taking their portion of meat from the younger ones, by the law of the strongest; and during great part of the time that Wesley remained there, a small daily portion of bread was his only food. Those theoretical physicians who recommend spare diet for the human animal might appeal with triumph to the length of days which he attained, and the elastic constitution which he enjoyed. He himself imputed this blessing, in great measure, to the strict obedience with which he performed an injunction of his father's, that he should run round the Charter-house garden three times every morning. Here for his quietness, regularity, and application, he became a favourite with the master, Dr. Walker; and through life he retained so great a predilection for the place, that on his annual visit to London, he made it a custom to walk through the scene of his boyhood. To most men every year would render a pilgrimage of this kind more painful than

the last; but Wesley seems never to have looked back with melancholy upon the days that were gone; earthly regrets of this kind could find no room in one who was continually pressing onward to the goal."

Poor little John! though time softened the remembrance of it all afterwards, no doubt it was hard enough to bear, when the older boys snatched away his meat as he returned from the cook's house where their rations were served out, and left him nothing but bread to satisfy an appetite stimulated by the "runs round the garden" so conscientiously performed. However, by-and-by he grew old enough to fight for his meat, and also for that of some other persecuted little boys, and after that he had a better time of it.

Two years after John was sent to the Charter-house his five-years-younger brother Charles was sent to school at Westminster, where their eldest brother Samuel, a clever youth, was one of the ushers. Samuel generously paid the cost of his youngest brother's course of study. Charles was a spirited boy, well built, active, and afraid of nothing, which qualities made him a great favourite, and gained him the title of "captain of the school."

He was as generous as he was brave; as the following incident, related by Dr. Smith, shows us:—

"There was a Scotch laddie at school, whose ancestors had taken sides with the Pretender, as the Papist claimant to the throne was called, and who, in consequence, was greatly persecuted by the other boys; but the 'captain' took him under his own special charge, defended him, fought for him, and saved him from what would otherwise have been a life of misery. This lad was James Murray, afterward the great Baron Mansfield, Lord Chief Justice of England."

While Charles was at Westminster School, Mr. Garret Wesley, a rich Irish gentleman, wished to adopt him as his heir, and take him to Ireland. The proposal was first made to the Rector of Epworth, and he, characteristically, left the decision

to Charles. The boy, who was devotedly attached to his family and doubtless shrank from giving them up so completely, and who had also, even then, dreams of a career of hard work which should benefit mankind, refused to accept Mr. Garret Wesley's offer. Disappointed about Charles, that gentleman adopted Richard Colley, an Irish relative, who took the name of Wesley, and became the grandfather of the Marquis of Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington. John Wesley called this "a fair escape." Had Charles chosen to go to Ireland, he might never have become "the sweet singer" whose hymns have enriched the psalmody of the world, and England might never have had its illustrious Duke of Wellington.

John Wesley made excellent use of his time at the Charterhouse, and then he seems to have been studying with his brother Samuel, for we find the latter writing to their father in 1719, when the worthy rector was hesitating over some decision about the future of Charles:—

"My brother *Jack*, I can faithfully assure you, gives you no manner of discouragement from breeding your third son a scholar."[1] Two or three months afterwards he mentions him again in a letter to his father:—

"Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can."

He was then sixteen, and the next year he was elected to Christ Church, Oxford.

[1] *The Life of John Wesley*, by John Whitehead, M.D.

CHAPTER V.

AT OXFORD.

THE Charter-house Foundation scholars were not permitted to go to Oxford empty-handed; indeed it is said John had won a scholarship of £40 a year, and he was admitted to Christ Church College in 1720. Before he went to the University he had acquired some knowledge of Hebrew under his brother Samuel's tuition. "At college he continued his studies with all diligence, and was noticed there for his attainments, and especially for his skill in logic, by which he frequently put to silence those who contended with him in after-life. No man, indeed, was ever more dexterous in the art of reasoning. A charge was brought once against him that he delighted to perplex his opponents by his expertness in sophistry; he repelled it with indignation. 'It has been my first care,' said he, 'to see that my cause was good, and never, either in jest or earnest, to defend the wrong side of a question; and shame on me if I cannot defend the right after so much practice, and after having been so early accustomed to separate truth from falsehood, how artfully soever they are twisted together.' Like his father and both his brothers, he was no inexpert versifier in his youth. This, however, was a talent which he forbore to use when ascetic opinions began to influence him, and the honour of being the sweet singer of Methodism was reserved for his brother Charles."[1]

As to his manners, Southey says, "While he was an undergraduate his manners were free and cheerful, and that activity of disposition which bore him afterwards

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*.

OXFORD FROM HEADINGTON HILL.

through such uninterrupted labour displayed itself in wit and vivacity."

One rebuff John met with on his entrance at Oxford which was as unexpected as it was disagreeable.

Dr. Sacheverell was ten years younger than Samuel Wesley, senior.[1] He had fine talents, was "a perfect firebrand of a preacher," and one of the highest of High Churchmen. He published two bitter sermons, which caused the most intense excitement. The House of Commons passed a resolution that they "were malicious, scandalous, and seditious libels, highly reflecting upon her Majesty and her Government, the late happy Revolution, and the Protestant succession as by law established," and ordered that he should attend at the bar of the House. He was tried and found guilty in February 1710. The defence which he delivered on the occasion was written by Samuel Wesley.

When John went to Oxford, his father, knowing Dr. Sacheverell had strong influence at Christ Church College, and thinking he would be glad to show kindness to the son of the man who had done him such a service, directed John to call upon him and get letters of recommendation.

John did so, and afterwards related the interview in his own peculiar style. He said:—

"I was a very little fellow when I was introduced to him [Dr. Sacheverell]. I found him alone, as tall as a May-pole, and as fine as an Archbishop. After I made known to him the object of my visit, he said, 'You are too young to go to the University. You cannot know Greek and Latin yet. Go back to school.'"

John Wesley said: "I looked at him as Goliath looked at David, and despised him in my heart. I thought, 'If I do not know Greek and Latin better than you, I ought to go back to school indeed.' I left him, and neither entreaties nor commands could have again brought me back to him."

[1] *Anecdotes of the Wesleys*, by the Rev. J. B. Wakely.

CHRIST CHURCH AND MERTON, OXFORD.

John took indeed, as we have seen, a high position as a student at Oxford, and soon became quite famous for his learning in the classics, and especially for his skill in logic.

Christ Church was at that time the most aristocratic, fashionable, and luxurious of all the Oxford colleges, whose chief function was to give a mild scholastic flavour to the manners of the prospective noblemen of the realm, and was therefore ill adapted to train a religious leader for his work.[1]

John was astonished at the prevalence there of all manner of dissipations, drinking, gambling, etc. "For a time he was carried by the current out of his moral latitude, but not for long."

No, the careful home-training he had received in childhood, his mother's religious teaching, her prayers, and the consciousness that he could never entirely divest himself of, that he had been saved from the Epworth fire, "as a brand from the burning," were able to prevent his falling into outward sins. And perhaps his poverty was an additional safeguard, for the "heavy sinning" at Oxford implied heavy expense, and John could not afford to be "fashionably wicked."

Still, six years of roughing it at the Charter-house, and then the life at Christ Church, Oxford, were not calculated to advance his spiritual welfare. We find him confessing that he had lost his childish religion and had become "a sinner," but not to any desperate degree.

Dr. Whitehead tells us that John Wesley's "natural temper in his youth was gay and sprightly, with a turn for wit and humour. When he was about twenty-one years of age he was, as Mr. Badcock has observed, the very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments. His perfect knowledge of the classics gave a smooth polish to his wit, and an air of superior elegance to all his compositions. He had already begun to amuse himself occasionally with writing verses,

[1] Rev. W. H. Daniels.

though most of his poetical pieces at this period were, I believe, either imitations or translations of the Latin. Sometime in this year (1724), however, he wrote an imitation of the 65th Psalm, which he sent to his father, who said, "I like your verses on the 65th Psalm, and would not have you bury your talent."

In the summer of this year, his brother Samuel broke his leg and wrote to inform him of his misfortune, together with the fact that their mother was coming to London to meet her brother from India, and that, if he liked, he might come and meet her there. To which John answered :—

"I believe I need not use many arguments to show I am sorry for your misfortune, though at the same time I am glad you are in a fair way of recovery. If I had heard of it from any one else, I might probably have pleased you with some impertinent consolations ; but the way of your relating it is a sufficient proof that they are what you don't stand in need of. And, indeed, if I understand you rightly, you have more reason to thank God that you did not break both, than to repine because you have broken one leg. You have undoubtedly heard the story of the Dutch seaman, who having broke one of his legs by a fall from the main-mast, instead of condoling himself, thanked God that he had not broke his neck. I scarce know whether your first news vexed me, or your last news pleased me more; but I can assure you that, though I did not cry for grief at the former, I did for joy at the latter part of your letter. The two things which I most wished for of almost anything in the world were to see my mother and Westminster once again, and to see them both together was so far above my expectations, that I almost looked upon it as next to an impossibility. I have been so frequently disappointed when I had set my heart on any pleasure, that I will never again depend on any before it comes."

It was just as well he did not, for when the time came he was unable to leave Oxford, because money for the journey was

wanting, and he was already in debt. As soon as she reached home, Mrs. Wesley wrote him the following anxious yet hopeful little note :—

"WROOTE, *August 19th*, 1724.[1]

"DEAR JACK,—I am uneasy because I have not heard from you. I don't think you do well to stand upon points, and to write only letter for letter. Let me hear from you often, and inform me of the state of your health, and whether you have any reasonable hopes of being out of debt. I am most concerned for the good, generous man that lent you ten pounds, and am ashamed to beg a month or two longer, since he has been so kind as to grant us so much time already. We were amused with your uncle's coming from India, but I suppose these fancies are laid aside. I wish there had been anything in it, for then perhaps it would have been in my power to have provided for you. But, if all things fail, I hope God will not forsake us. We have still His good providence to depend on, which has a thousand expedients to relieve us beyond our view.

"Dear Jack, be not discouraged; do your duty; keep close to your studies, and hope for better days. Perhaps, notwithstanding all, we shall pick up a few crumbs for you before the end of the year.

"Dear Jacky, I beseech Almighty God to bless thee!

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

[1] When Mr. Wesley received the additional living of Wroote, he and his family went to live there. Perhaps they were able to let the larger house at Epworth.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING FOR HOLY ORDERS.

WESLEY'S thoughts do not seem to have been directed towards the Church as a profession during his undergraduate days, but when at last the time arrived for him to make up his mind what he wished to be, we find him writing to his father for advice as to whether he should apply for ordination. His father's answer is dated the 26th of January 1725.

"As to what you mention," he says, "of entering into Holy Orders, it is indeed a great work, and I am pleased to find you think it so." And he goes on to say that, though there is no harm in his son's looking upon the work as a means of livelihood, "yet certainly a desire and intention to lead a stricter life, and a belief that one should do so, is a better reason; though this should by all means be begun before, or ten to one it will deceive us afterwards. But if a man be unwilling and undesirous to enter into Orders, it is easy to guess whether he can say so much as, with common honesty, that he trusts he is 'moved to it by the Holy Ghost.' But the principal spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God, and the service of His Church in the edification of our neighbour. And woe to him who with any meaner leading view attempts so sacred a work." He then mentions the qualifications necessary for Holy Orders, and answers a question which his son asked. "You ask me which is the best Commentary on the Bible? I answer the Bible itself. For the several paraphrases and translations of it in the Polyglot, compared with the original and with one another, are, in my opinion, to an honest, devout,

industrious, and humble man, infinitely preferable to any comment I ever saw. But Grotius is the best for the most part, especially on the Old Testament." He then hints that he thinks it is too soon for his son to take Orders, and encourages him to work and write while he has leisure to do so.

"You see," he goes on to say touchingly, "time has shaken me by the hand; and death is but a little behind him. My eyes and heart are now almost all I have left; and I bless God for them."[1]

John's mother, however, seems to have differed from her husband in the opinion that their son was too young to take Orders, for in reference to his letter to his father on the subject, she writes—"I was much pleased with it, and liked the proposal well. I think the sooner you are a deacon the better, because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which of all other studies I humbly conceive to be the best for Candidates for Orders."

"The alteration of your temper," she says in the same letter, "has occasioned me much speculation. I, who am apt to be sanguine, hope it may proceed from the operations of God's Holy Spirit, that, by taking off your relish for earthly enjoyments, He may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you if you cherish these dispositions. And now, in good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary: all things beside are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains; if you have not, you

[1] The Rector had recently had a slight stroke of paralysis, which disabled his right hand.

CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS, CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy. This matter deserves great consideration by all, but especially by those designed for the Ministry; who ought above all things to make their own calling and election sure, lest, after they had preached to others, they themselves should be cast away."

Mrs. Wesley then warns him against "trifling studies," which might lead to the neglect of those more absolutely necessary, and adds, "I dare advise nothing; God Almighty direct and bless you."

John now proceeded to apply himself diligently to the study of divinity in his leisure hours, with the result that he became more desirous than ever of taking Orders.

He wrote twice more on the subject to his father, who answered him in March, informing him that he had changed his mind and was "inclined" that he should take Orders that summer. "But in the first place," said he, "if you love yourself or me, pray heartily."

The books which seem to have had the greatest influence on Wesley in the course of his reading that summer were *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, and Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*. He did not altogether agree with what they taught, but "he began to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to all our thoughts as well as words and actions,"[1] and was convinced that the influence of the Christian religion was much more extensive than he had before imagined. He resented, however, the strictness and asceticism of À Kempis.

With a pleasing humbleness of mind and reverence for the opinions of older and more experienced Christians, not often seen in young men of twenty-two, Wesley wrote to his parents for advice and asked their opinion. His letter is dated May 29, 1725.

"I was advised to read Thomas à Kempis over, which I had

[1] *Wesley's Works*, vol. xxvi. p. 274.

frequently seen, but never much looked into before. I think he must have been a person of great piety and devotion, but it is my misfortune to differ from him in some of his main points. I cannot think that when God sent us into the world, He had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up the cross imply our bidding adieu to all joy and satisfaction, how is it reconcilable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion, 'that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace'? Another of his tenets is, that all mirth and pleasure is useless if not sinful—and that nothing is an affliction to a good man; that he ought to thank God even for sending him misery. This, in my opinion, is contrary to God's design in afflicting us; for though He chasteneth those whom He loveth, yet it is in order to humble them. I hope when you have time you will give me your thoughts on these subjects, and set me right if I am mistaken."

His mother's answer came first.

"I have À Kempis by me; but have not read him lately. I cannot recollect the passages you mention; but believing you do him justice, I do positively aver that he is extremely in the wrong in that impious, I was about to say blasphemous suggestion, that God, by an irreversible decree, has determined any man to be miserable even in this world. His intentions, as Himself, are holy, just, and good; and all the miseries incident to men here and hereafter proceed from themselves. The case stands thus:—This life is a state of probation, wherein eternal happiness or misery are proposed to our choice; the one as a reward of a virtuous, the other as a consequence of a vicious life. Man is a compound being, a strange mixture of spirit and matter, or rather a creature wherein those opposite principles are united without mixture, yet each principle, after an incomprehensible manner, subject to the influence of the other. The true happiness of man, under this consideration, consists in a due subordination of the inferior to the superior

powers, of the animal to the rational nature, and of both to God.

"This was his original righteousness and happiness that was lost in Adam; and to restore man to his happiness by the recovery of his original righteousness was certainly God's design in admitting him to the state of trial in the world, and of our redemption by Jesus Christ. And surely this was a design truly worthy of God, and the greatest instance of mercy that even omnipotent goodness could exhibit to us.

"As the happiness of man consists in a due subordination of the inferior to the superior powers, etc., so the inversion of this order is the true source of human misery. There is in us all a natural propension towards the body and the world. The beauty, pleasures, and ease of the body strangely charm us; the wealth and honours of the world allure us; and all, under the management of a subtle malicious adversary, give a prodigious force to present things; and if the animal life once gets the ascendant of our reason, it is the greatest folly imaginable, because he seeks it where God has not designed he shall ever find it. But this is the case of the generality of men: they live as mere animals, wholly given up to the interests and pleasures of the body; and all the use of their understanding is to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof, without the least regard to future happiness or misery.

"I take Kempis to have been an honest, weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge, by his condemning all mirth or pleasure as sinful or useless, in opposition to so many direct and plain texts of Scripture. Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure? Of the innocence or malignity of actions? Take this rule:—Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

John Wesley's father wrote:—"As for Thomas à Kempis, all the world are apt to strain either on one side or the other; but, for all that, mortification is still an indispensable Christian duty. The world is a siren, and we must have a care of her; and if the *young man will rejoice in his youth*, yet let

HALL, CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

him take care that his joys be innocent; and, in order to do this, remember that for all these things God will bring him into judgment. I have only this to add of my friend and old companion, that, making some grains of allowance, he may be read to great advantage; nay, that it is almost impossible

to peruse him seriously without admiring, and I think in some measure imitating, his heroic strains of humility, piety, and devotion."

Perceiving, says Dr. Whitehead, the good effects of consulting his parents, and that his mother in particular took a pleasure in discussing at large the subjects he proposed to her, John consulted her in a letter dated June 18th, on some things he had met with in Bishop Taylor.

"You have so well satisfied me," he said, "as to the tenets of Thomas à Kempis, that I have ventured to trouble you once more on a more dubious subject." He then says that a friend, whom he took "to be a person of good judgment," had been terribly frightened when she was young by reading Dr. Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, because "he seemed to exclude all from being in a way of salvation who did not come up to his rules, some of which are altogether impracticable." He then states several particulars, which Bishop Taylor makes necessary parts of humility and repentance, and amongst others—

"We must be sure, in some sense or other, to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come." And again: "Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, therefore be sorrowful for ever having sinned."

"I take the more notice of this last sentence," he said, "because it seems to contradict his own words in the next section, where he says that by the Lord's Supper all the members are united to one another, and to Christ the Head. The Holy Ghost confers on us the grace necessary for, and our souls receive the seeds of an immortal nature. Now surely these graces are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not; if we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, which He will not do unless we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy,

but in fear and trembling; and then undoubtedly, in this life, we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this. Humility is undoubtedly necessary to salvation; and if all these things are essential to humility, who can be humble? who can be saved?"

His mother replied that what Dr. Taylor called humility was not the virtue itself, but the accidental effects of it, which may in some instances, and must in others, be separated from it. She then proceeded to state her own idea of humility.

"Humility is the mean between pride, or an overvaluing ourselves on one side, and a base abject temper on the other. It consists in an *habitual disposition* to think meanly of ourselves; which disposition is wrought in us by a true knowledge of God; His supreme essential glory, His absolute immense perfection of being, and a just sense of our dependence upon Him and past offences against Him; together with a consciousness of our present infirmities and frailties."

To which John replied: "You have much obliged me by your thoughts on Dr. Taylor, especially with respect to humility, which is a point he does not seem to clear. As to absolute humility consisting in a mean opinion of ourselves, considered with respect to God alone, I can readily join with his opinion. But I am more uncertain as to comparative, if I may so term it; and think some plausible reasons may be alleged to show it is not in our power, and consequently not a virtue, to think ourselves the worst in every company.

"We have so invincible an attachment to truth already perceived, that it is impossible for us to disbelieve it. A distinct perception commands our assent, and the will is under a moral necessity of yielding to it. It is not therefore in every case a matter of choice, whether we will believe ourselves worse than our neighbours or no; since we may distinctly perceive the truth of this proposition, He is worse than I; and then the judgment is not free. One, for instance, who is

in company with a Freethinker, or other person signally debauched in faith and practice, cannot avoid knowing himself to be the better of the two, these propositions extorting our assent: an Atheist is worse than a believer; a man who endeavours to please God is better than he who defies Him.

"If a true knowledge of God be necessary to absolute humility, a true knowledge of our neighbour should be necessary to comparative. But to judge one's self the worst of all men implies a want of such knowledge. . . . Again, this kind of humility can never be well-pleasing to God, since it does not flow from faith, without which it is impossible to please Him. Faith is a species of belief, and belief is defined an assent to a proposition upon reasonable grounds, and consequently no faith.

"That we can never be so certain of the pardon of our sins as to be assured they will never rise up against us, I firmly believe. We know that they will infallibly do so if ever we apostatise; and I am not satisfied what evidence there can be of our final perseverance until we have finished our course. But I am persuaded we may know if we are *now* in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised in the Holy Scriptures to our sincere endeavours, and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity.

"As I understand faith to be an assent to any truth upon rational grounds, I do not think it possible, without perjury, to swear I believe anything unless I have rational grounds for my persuasion. Now that which contradicts reason cannot be said to stand on rational grounds; and such undoubtedly is every proposition which is incompatible with the Divine Justice or Mercy. . . . What then shall I say of Predestination? An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation does, I suppose, exclude all from that deliverance who are not chosen. And if it was inevitably decreed from eternity that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world

were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine Justice or Mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for crimes which he could not but commit? That God should be the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the Divine Nature and Perfections.

"I call faith an assent upon rational grounds, because I hold Divine Testimony to be the most reasonable of all evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily, at length, be resolved into reason. God is true, therefore what He says is true: He hath said this, therefore this is true. When any one can bring me more reasonable propositions than these, I am ready to assent to them; till then it will be highly unreasonable to change my opinion."

"As for Jack, he will have a reason for everything he is to do," the father had said of John, when he was a child; and here we find the young man still searching for right reasons and insisting upon the necessity for them.

But the mother replies—

"You say that I have obliged you by sending my thoughts of humility, and yet you do not seem to regard them in the least, but still dwell on that single point in Dr. Taylor of thinking ourselves the worst in every company. I shall answer your arguments, after I have observed that we differ in our notions of the virtue itself. You will have it consist in thinking mainly of ourselves; I in a habitual disposition to think meanly of ourselves. . . . Of what importance can this inquiry (whether our neighbours or we be worse) be to us? Comparisons in these cases are very odious, and do most certainly proceed from some bad principle in those who make them. . . . There is nothing plainer than that a Free-thinker as a Free-thinker, and an Atheist as an Atheist, is worse in that respect than a Believer as a Believer. But if

that Believer's practice does not correspond to his faith—he is worse than an Infidel.

"If we are not obliged to think ourselves the worst in every company, I am perfectly sure that a man sincerely humble will be afraid to think himself the best in any. And though it should be his lot (it can never be his choice) to fall into the company of notorious sinners; who makes thee to differ? or what hast thou that thou hast not received? is sufficient, if well considered, to humble us, and silence all aspiring thoughts and self-applause; and may instruct us to ascribe our preservation from enormous offences to the sovereign grace of God, and not to our own natural purity or strength.

"You are somewhat mistaken in your notions of faith. All faith is an assent, but all assent is not faith. . . . The true measure of faith is the authority of the revealer, the weight of which always holds proportion to our conviction of his ability and integrity. Divine faith is an assent to whatever God has revealed to us, because He has revealed it."

We have given so much of this correspondence with his mother, that we may show John Wesley's manner of reasoning whilst still so young, and, also, how assiduously and critically he studied the authors he was reading. The letters also show how close was the intellectual and spiritual bond between mother and son, and how ably the former, with her multitudinous home cares, was able to enter into the difficulties of the young Divinity student. Perhaps the secret of Susanna Wesley's success in keeping pace with her children in their mental and spiritual growth may be found in the fact that at the age of thirty she began her *life-long* custom of devoting the first hour of every day to religious meditation and prayer.

Dr. Whitehead says—"It was impossible for Mr. Wesley to correspond with such a parent and not be improved. And it is certain that he never forgot some of the rules and maxims which he had learned from her. The effect of his present inquiries was deep and lasting. In reading Kempis he tells

us that he had frequently much sensible comfort, such as he was an utter stranger to before. And the chapter in Dr. Taylor on purity of intention convinced him of the necessity of being holy in heart, as well as regular in his outward deportment. 'Instantly,' he says, 'I resolved to dedicate all my life to God—*all* my thoughts and words and actions, being thoroughly convinced there was no medium; but that *every part* of my life (not *some* only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself,—that is, in effect, to the Devil.'"

Meeting, too, with a religious friend about this time—he had never had one before—he began to alter the whole form of his conversation, and to set out in earnest upon *a new life.* He communicated every week. He watched against all sin, whether in word or deed; and began to aim at and pray for inward holiness.

He had now no longer any doubt about taking Holy Orders, and we find his father writing to him—"If you be what you write, you and I shall be happy, and you will much alleviate my misfortune."

Mr. Wesley removed some scruples which his son had expressed concerning the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

"Their point," he said, "was levelled only against obstinate heretics, and a distinction was undoubtedly to be made between what is wilful and what is in some measure involuntary. God certainly will make a difference, and to Him it must be left. Our business is to keep to the rule which He has given us. As to the main of the cause," he continues, "the best way to deal with our adversaries is to turn the war and their own vaunted arms against them. From balancing the schemes it will appear that there are many irreconcilable absurdities and contradictions in theirs, but none such (though indeed some difficulties) in ours. They can never prove a contradiction in our Three in One, unless we affirm them to be so in the same respect, which every child knows we do not.

But we can prove there is one in a creature's being a Creator, which they assert of our Lord."

And then, as the time for John's ordination drew near, his father wrote—"God fit you for your great work. Fast, watch and pray; believe, love, endure, and be happy; towards which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father."

CHAPTER VII.

FELLOW OF LINCOLN.

In the autumn of the year 1725 John Wesley was ordained by Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford, and afterwards Primate, whom he regarded as "a great and good man." Fifty years afterwards he remembered with gratitude the Archbishop's advice to him, "Not to spend his time in contending for or against things of a disputable nature, but in testifying against vice, and in promoting real, essential holiness." And we are told that Wesley bore this in mind so clearly as to avoid many controversies, sometimes leaving that work to others, and sometimes allowing them to drop.

His first sermon was preached at South Leigh, near Oxford, and immediately afterwards he preached at Epworth a funeral sermon on the death of a young and promising parishioner.[1] He assisted his father for a time, and then returned to Oxford.

And now we find him directing his inquiries into the evidences of the Christian religion. He wrote to his mother on this subject on November the 3rd, who, in her answer dated the 10th, encourages him to persevere in such investigations.

"I highly approve," said she, "of your care to search into the grounds and reasons of our most Holy Religion; which you may do, if your intention be pure, and yet retain the integrity of your faith. Nay, the more you study on that subject, the more reason you will find to depend on the veracity of God; inasmuch as your perception of Him will be clearer, and you will more plainly discover the congruity there is between the ordinances and precepts of the Gospel

[1] R. Denny Urlin.

and right reason. Nor is it an hard matter to prove that the whole system of Christianity is founded thereon."

It was only a small portion of his time, however, which John employed in these studies. His diary shows that he was diligent in the study of the classics, and in the performance of his academical exercises. "The time also drew near when it was expected that the election of a Fellow of Lincoln College would take place, with a view to which his friends had been exerting themselves all the summer. When Dr. Morley, the Rector, was spoken to on the subject, he said, 'I will inquire into Mr. Westley's[1] character.' He did so, and gave him leave to stand a candidate."[2] Dr. Morley also used his influence for him, and showed himself to be a very kind friend.

Even in college elections, says Southey, there is play enough for evil passions, and too much licence allowed them. Though Wesley was not yet eccentric in his habits of life, the strictness of his religious principles was sufficiently remarkable to afford subject for satire; and his opponents hoped to prevent his success by making him ridiculous.

In reference to this his father wrote—"As for the gentlemen candidates you write of—Does anybody think that the Devil has no Agents left? It is a very callow virtue, sure, that cannot bear being laughed at. I think our Captain and Master endured something more for us, before He entered into glory; and unless we follow His steps, in vain do we hope to share that glory with Him. Nor shall any who sincerely endeavour to serve Him, either by turning others to righteousness, or keeping them steadfast in it, lose their reward."

And again, in another letter, Mr. Wesley exhorts John to

[1] We find the name of the family spelt in the various records in seven different ways—Wellesleigh, Wellesley, Westleigh, Westley, Weisley, Weisly, Wesley.

[2] Dr. Whitehead.

bear it all patiently. "But be sure," he adds, "never to return the like treatment to your enemy. You and I have hitherto done the best we could in that affair; do you continue to do the same, and rest the whole with Providence."

His mother encouraged him in a different manner. "If," said she, "it be a weak nature that cannot bear being laughed at, I am sure it is a strong and well-confirmed virtue that can stand the test of a brisk buffoonery. Many people, though well inclined, have yet made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience merely because they could not bear raillery. I would therefore advise those who are in the beginning of a Christian course to shun the company of profane wits as they would the plague or poverty; and never to contract an intimacy with any but such as have a good sense of religion."

But, in spite of all the opposition, John Wesley was elected Fellow of Lincoln in March 1726. His parents' joy in his success was very great. Mr. Wesley, who had made great exertions to assist him with money from time to time, wrote that he questioned whether he had £5 to keep his family from May-day until after harvest. "And what will be my own fate, God knows, before the summer be over, *sed passi graviora.*" But he adds, "Wherever I am, my Jacky is Fellow of Lincoln!"

And his mother gave thanks to God with a full heart, and soon had one of her great desires fulfilled, for John came home for the whole summer and acted as his father's curate, reading prayers and preaching twice every Sunday either at Epworth or Wroote. The rest of his time was well spent in pursuing his studies and conversing with his parents on deeply interesting and instructive matters. In his diary he frequently mentions the conversations they had; amongst others, they discussed how to increase their faith, their hope, and their love of God; prudence, simplicity, sincerity, pride, vanity; wit, humour, fancy, courtesy, and general usefulness. His parents

made such observations as reflection and long experience had suggested to them, and he carefully took note of their most important sayings.

When Wesley returned to Oxford in September, he took up his new position in Lincoln College, one of the smallest, poorest, and most scholarly of the nineteen colleges which are comprised in the University of Oxford.

"Some of the Fellowships in the rich colleges at Oxford yielded an annual income of £600 or £700; those at Lincoln College, however, were far less valuable, but ample for the supply of his wants.

"The position of Fellow was both honourable and easy. Its duties consisted in residing in the college, taking such part as might be agreeable in the general management of its affairs, and helping to maintain the college dignity by a life of learned leisure; it was, in a word, a scholastic sinecure, requiring some distinguished merit to obtain it, and continuing until death, marriage, or the presentation of some fat living. For a man of Wesley's turn of mind this was indeed a paradise. No more debts to haunt him, no more burdens to lay upon his poor father, an assured position among English scholars, and a comfortable home for life in the midst of the best helps to learning then to be found in the world."[1]

Hitherto John Wesley had been, as we have seen, extremely poor; "so much so that his habit of wearing the hair long, begun in opposition to the prevailing fashion, was boldly set down by himself to a motive of economy—he had nothing to spend on hair-dressers. This habit he retained through life, as appears by the numerous portraits."[2]

The removal to Lincoln enabled John also to get rid himself of all unsympathising acquaintance, in a manner which he related, sixty years afterwards, in his sermon on leaving the world.

[1] Rev. W. H. Daniels.
[2] *The Churchman's Life of Wesley.*

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, OXFORD.

"When it pleased God," he said, "to give me a settled resolution to be not a nominal, but a real Christian (being then about twenty-two years of age), my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference: I knew my own ignorance; they did not know theirs. I faintly endeavoured to help them, but in vain. Meantime I found, by sad experience, that even their harmless conversation, so called, damped all my good resolutions. But how to get rid of them was a question I resolved in my mind again and again. I saw no possible way, unless it should please God to remove me to another college. He did so, in a manner utterly contrary to all human probability. I was elected Fellow of a college where I knew not one person. I foresaw abundance of people would come to see me, either out of friendship, civility, or curiosity, and that I should have offers of acquaintance new and old; but I had now fixed my plan. Entering now, as it were, into a new world, I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice, and to choose such only as would help me on my way to Heaven. In consequence of this I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to think that the greater part of these truly loved or feared God. Such acquaintance, therefore, I did not choose: I could not expect they would do me any good. Therefore, when any of these came, I behaved as courteously as I could; but to the question, 'When will you come to see me?' I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more. And I bless God," he adds, "this has been my invariable rule for about three score years. I knew many reflections would follow, but that did not move me, as I knew full well it was my calling to go *through evil report and good report.*"

From this time Wesley began to keep a diary; a practice, Southey remarks, which was at one time very general amongst persons religiously disposed, and to which the world owes some

"WESLEY'S VINE," OXFORD, SHOWING HIS STUDY WINDOW.

valuable materials for history as well as individual biography; but perhaps no person has in this manner conveyed so lively a picture of himself as Wesley. "During a most restless life of incessant occupation, he found time to register not only his proceedings, but his thoughts, his studies, and his occasional remarks upon men and books, and not unfrequently upon miscellaneous subjects, with a vivacity which characterised him to the last."

Eight months after his election to a Fellowship, the high opinion entertained of his abilities and learning was expressed by his being appointed Greek lecturer and Moderator of the classes.

Wesley, we are told, always regarded this last appointment "as a very gracious providence." It gave him a complete knowledge of that important branch of learning by which he was afterwards enabled during his whole life to defend the truth against all opponents. "For several years,"[1] he observes, "I was Moderator in the disputations which were held six times a week at Lincoln College, in Oxford. I could not avoid acquiring hereby some degree of expertness in arguing, and especially in discerning and pointing out well-covered and plausible fallacies. I have since found abundant reason to praise God for giving me this honest art. By this, when men have hedged me in by what they call demonstrations, I have been many times able to dash them in pieces; in spite of all its covers, to touch the very point where the fallacy lay, and it flew open in a moment."

He was now fully employed between his public offices and his pupils. Of the latter he took the greatest care, accounting himself not only responsible for them to their parents and the community, but to God. He laboured not only to make them scholars, but Christians also; and to that end wrote a form of prayers for them (which is still extant) for every day in the week.

[1] *Wesley's Journal.*

His address to the tutors of the University will clearly show the spirit in which he discharged his duties.

"Ye venerable men," says he, "who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and to train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you filled with the Holy Ghost—with all those fruits of the spirit which your important office so indispensably requires? Is your heart whole with God—full of love and zeal to set up His kingdom on earth? Do you continually remind those under your care that the one rational end of all studies is to know, love, and serve the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent? Do you inculcate upon them, day by day, that love alone never faileth? (whereas, whether there be tongues, they shall fail; or philosophical knowledge, it shall vanish away): and that without love all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and all mankind for His sake? Have you an eye to this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and the measure of their studies: desiring and labouring that, wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many burning and shining lights, adorning the Gospel of Christ in all things? And permit me to ask, do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken? Do you labour herein with all your might, exerting every faculty of your soul, using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power? Let it not be said that I speak here as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so, I only speak as if they were intended to be Christians."

Bold words were these coming from so young a man, and they must have stirred the hearts of those to whom they were addressed.

CHAPTER VIII.

CURATE OF WROOTE.

"WESLEY now formed for himself a scheme of studies, resolving not to vary from it for some years at least. Mondays and Tuesdays were allotted to the classics; Wednesdays to logic and ethics; Thursdays to Hebrew and Arabic; Fridays to metaphysics and natural philosophy; Saturdays to oratory and poetry, but chiefly to composition in those arts; and the Sabbath to divinity. It appears by his diary, also, that he gave great attention to mathematics. But he had come to that conclusion at which, sooner or later, every studious man must arrive—that life is not long enough for the attainment of general knowledge, and that there are many things of which the most learned must content themselves to be ignorant. He says to his mother, 'I am perfectly come over to your opinion, that there are many truths it is not worth while to know. Curiosity indeed might be a sufficient plea for our laying out some time upon them, if we had half-a-dozen centuries of lives to come; but methinks it is great ill husbandry to spend a considerable part of the small pittance now allowed us, in what makes us neither a quick nor a sure return.' Full of business as he now was, he found time for writing by rising an hour earlier in the morning, and going into company an hour later in the evening."[1]

All the Wesleys had a turn for poetry, and John occasionally, at this time, tried his hand at paraphrasing a psalm or writing a set of verses. His mother wrote to him judiciously on the subject—"I would not have you leave off making verses;

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*.

rather make poetry sometimes your diversion, though never your business."

In the beginning of the year 1727 John took his degree, and soon after went into Lincolnshire to work as his father's curate, Mr. Wesley being at that time in failing health. In the following July the young man received Priest's orders from Archbishop Potter; and it was this year, too, that he was

JOHN WESLEY AT TWENTY-THREE YEARS.

deeply influenced by reading the two famous treatises of the Rev. William Law—the *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection.*

"These," said John Wesley, "convinced me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian; and I determined, through His grace (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of), to be all devoted to God, to

give Him all my soul, my body, and my substance." Hitherto John Wesley had been more a teacher of morality, placing much dependence upon forms and observances; now, as he studied the Bible more closely than he had ever done, he saw in a clearer light the indispensable necessity of having the mind that was in Christ, and religion for the first time appeared as "the inward and outward conformity to the Master." From this time he became a faithful follower of the great Example.[1]

"He now insisted on a high standard of religious consecration and personal holiness, both active and passive. He presently united with these views not a little of the High Church doctrine and discipline. These two books—the above-mentioned books of Law's—convinced him, he said, of the 'exceeding height and breadth and depth of the love of God;' and the 'light flowed in so mightily upon his soul, that everything appeared in a new view.'"[2]

As these religious feelings deepened and strengthened, the state of mind came on him which led the enthusiasts of early ages into the wilderness. He began to long for seclusion, and thought it "the settled temper of his soul" that he should for some time at least be fixed in such a retirement from the world that he might be able to confirm in himself those habits which he thought best, before "the flexibility of youth should be past." A school was proposed to him, with a good salary annexed to it, in one of the Yorkshire dales. He was pleased with the idea.

"But what has made me wish for it [the school] most," he wrote, "is the frightful description, as they call it, which some gentlemen who know the place gave me of it yesterday. It lies in a little vale, so pent up between two hills, that it is scarce accessible on any side; so that you can expect little company from without, and within there is none at all. I should therefore be entirely at liberty to converse with company of my own

[1] Tyer. [2] *The Churchman's Life of Wesley.*

choosing, whom for that reason I would bring with me; and company equally agreeable wherever fixed could not put me to less expense.

> " 'The sun that walks his airy way
> To cheer the world, and bring the day;
> The moon that shines with borrow'd light,
> The stars that gild the gloomy night,
> All of these, and all I see,
> Should be sung, and sung by me;
> These praise their Maker as they can,
> But want, and ask the tongue of man.'"

But the school was otherwise disposed of, at which his mother was well pleased. "I am not sorry," said she, "that you have missed the school; that way of life will not agree with your constitution; and I hope God has better work for you to do."

So John settled down at Wroote as his father's curate, and remained there about two years. Although a native of the county, he did not escape the ague, and perhaps it was better for his health when he was recalled to Oxford by a regulation that the junior Fellows, who might be chosen Moderators, should attend in person the duties of their office.

Before he returned to the University, however, John travelled many miles to see what was called a "serious man" and consult him. This person said to him, "Sir, you wish to serve God and go to Heaven. Remember you cannot serve Him alone. You must therefore *find* companions or *make* them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion." Never afterwards did Wesley forget those words, which seemed to have been sent to prepare him for his future work. And mingling with his thoughts of them, as he returned to Oxford, would doubtless come the memory of words he had read in one of the books of Law's which had made such a great impression upon his mind:—

"If some persons should unite themselves into little societies professing voluntary poverty, retirement, and devotion, that some might be relieved in their charities, and all be benefited by their example, such persons would be so far from being chargeable with any superstition that they might be justly said to restore that piety which was the boast and glory of the Church when its greatest men were alive."

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOLY CLUB.

CHARLES WESLEY, at the age of eighteen, was elected to Christ Church College, Oxford, shortly after John had become a Fellow of Lincoln. The younger brother had been nine years at Westminster under the care of his eldest brother Samuel, who was an usher of the school. As we have seen, Charles had been remarkable there for courage and skill, and by his bravery, generosity, and loving disposition, had made for himself many friends. He was also diligent in study and regular in his conduct, but when, upon his coming to Oxford, John sought to press upon him the importance of austerer habits and a more active devotion, he exclaimed, "What! would you have me become a saint all at once?" and turned a deaf ear to his admonitions.

But whilst John was away the two years in Lincolnshire, Charles changed very much; he became deeply serious, and at last he even wrote to ask his brother for some such advice as he had spurned before. "It is owing," he said, "in a great measure to somebody's prayers (my mother's, most likely) that I am come to think as I do, for I cannot tell how or where I woke out of my lethargy, only it was not long after you went away."

We are told that Charles's piety first showed itself in honest, hard work with his books; then in his partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper every week. And then, the next step—well, *he* did not need telling by any "serious man" that he must have companions on his way to Heaven. His genial, loving disposition impelled him to persuade his friends to

share his new hopes and endeavours, and so he soon got two or three young men to join him in a systematic effort to attain a state of absolute holiness. "They adopted certain rules for holy living, apportioned their time exactly among their various scholarly and religious duties, allowing as little as possible for sleeping and eating, and as much as possible for devotion. It was their regularity of life that won them the name of 'Methodists,' a term derived from the Greek word μεθοδικος, which signifies 'one who follows an exact method.' But John Wesley subsequently turned the tables upon his adversaries in a dictionary which he published for 'the people called Methodists,' in which he defined the word 'Methodist' as 'one who lives according to the method laid down in the Holy Scriptures.'"[1]

The little society thus formed by Charles could not fail to attract observation in an English University, and especially at a time when a laxity of opinions as well as morals prevailed, and infidelity was becoming so common that the Vice-Chancellor had exhorted the tutors to "discharge their duty with double diligence, and forbidden the undergraduates to read books which might tend to the weakening of their faith."[2] The greatest prudence would not have sufficed to save men from ridicule who, at such an age and in such a scene, professed to make religion the business of their lives; and prudence is rarely united with enthusiasm.

Several other names besides that of Methodist—which was not quite new—were given to the young men and their meetings; they were called derisively "Sacramentarians," "Bible-bigots," "Bible-moths," the "Holy," or the "Godly Club."

When John Wesley returned to Oxford, Charles and his friends at once made him their leader; and so he, who had in his retirement in the country been prepared for religious companionship, which he was to "find," or "make," now discovered it ready and waiting for him.

[1] Rev. W. H. Daniels. [2] Southey's *Life of Wesley*.

THE HOLY CLUB.

The two who, with John and Charles, were the first members of the little society were Robert Kirkham and William Morgan. To these were subsequently added George Whitefield, John Clayton, J. Broughton, Benjamin Ingham, James Hervey, John Whitelamb, Westley Hall, John Gambold, Charles Kinchin, William Smith, and Messrs. Salmon, Wogan, Boyce, Atkinson, and others.

"What shall we say of these Oxford Methodists?[1]

"William Morgan's career was brief and painful; he was the first Methodist who passed the pearly gates of the celestial city. Charles Kinchin, a lovely character, soon followed him. Charles Wesley, in his incomparable hymns, left behind him one of the noblest legacies that an uninspired man ever bequeathed to the Christian church. George Whitefield was the prince of preachers—a glorious emblem of the apocalyptic angel flying through the midst of Heaven with the good tidings of great joy unto all people. And James Hervey will be loved and honoured as long as there are men to appreciate the highest order of Christian piety, and the most mellifluent compositions in the English language."

Of course amongst the number there were others widely different. "But with all these drawbacks," says Tyerman, "the reader is challenged to produce a band of godly friends, whose lives and labours have, upon the whole, issued in such an amount of blessing to mankind as that which has resulted from the lives and labours of the students who in 1735 were known as Oxford Methodists."

Charles Wesley paid the utmost deference to his brother, as did also the other members of the little community. John had more learning and experience than any of the others, and was so active and yet so steady that, whilst continually gaining ground, he yet lost none. His judgment was good, his countenance wore an air of authority, and yet he assumed no airs, but listened respectfully to all that the others had

[1] *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, by Tyerman.

to say; he had schooled his natural impetuosity into a child-like simplicity of manner, which no doubt endeared him to all hearts.

Every night they met together to review what each had accomplished during the day, and to consult about the morrow's work. Their meetings were begun with prayer, and ended with a frugal supper. Their good deeds were various. Some conversed with young students and tried to rescue them from bad company and encourage them to lead a good life. Others undertook the instruction and relief of impoverished families; others the charge of some school; others of the parish workhouse. Others went daily to the Castle and to the city prison, to read good books and exhort those prisoners who would listen. Out of their own scanty means, and by quarterly contributions from others, they raised a fund to purchase books, medicines, etc., for the prisoners, and to pay the debts of such as only owed small amounts, that they might be allowed to go free. They read prayers twice a week in the Castle, and preached on Sunday, and administered the Sacrament once a month. One of the schools they visited was founded by John Wesley, who paid the teacher and clothed the children himself at its commencement.

His charity to the poor was only limited by his means. One cold winter's day, he tells us, a young girl whom the Methodists kept at school called upon him in a state nearly frozen, whereupon he said—

"You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to wear but that linen gown?"

"Sir, this is all I have," replied the poor girl.

Wesley put his hand in his pocket, but found it nearly empty. The walls of his room, however, were hung with pictures, and they now became his accusers.

"It struck me," said he, "will thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward! thou hast adorned thy walls with the money that might have screened this poor creature from

the cold. O Justice! O Mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?'"

He tells us too it was the practice of the Oxford Methodists to give away each year all they had after providing for their own necessities, and then adds his own case as an illustration:—

"One of them had £30 a year. He lived on £28, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving £60, he still lived on £28, and gave away £32. The third year he received £90, and gave away £62. The fourth year he received £120; still he lived as before on £28, and gave to the poor all the rest."[1]

He was as careful of time as of money. Finding that he lay awake a part of every night, he rose an hour earlier every morning until he found that if he got up at four o'clock he never had any sleepless hours. Sixty years after finding this out he wrote, "By the grace of God, I have risen at four o'clock ever since; and, taking the year round, I don't lie awake a quarter of an hour together in a month."

The whole of the little company had stated times at which they "prayed in concert," and stated occasions on which they used ejaculatory and other prayers. They tried to spend an hour every day in speaking to men directly about religion; they planned every conversation before they went into company with a view to making it most useful; they persuaded all they could to attend public prayers, sermons, and sacraments, "and in general to obey the laws of the Church Catholic, the Church of England, the State, the University, and their respective colleges." They refrained from speaking unkindly of any one, used intercessions for their friends, pupils, those who particularly desired it, and the family with whom they lodged, on different days of the week. They also communicated once a week at Christ Church.

Having all determined to be Bible Christians, their chief

[1] *Wesley's Works*, vol. vii.

book of reference in every matter was the Bible; next to that in authority among them, especially in settling their judgment as to the doctrine by Justification by Faith, was the Book of Homilies.

They were tenacious not only of all the doctrines of the Church of England, but of all her discipline, to the minutest points, and were scrupulously strict in observing the rubrics and canons. In short, Wesley himself says, "They were in the strongest sense High Churchmen."

THE CASTLE, OXFORD.

Some of their proceedings were ecclesiastically irregular though religiously right, and John Wesley prudently wrote to his father and elder brother for advice. The latter replied that, though dubious about some things, yet he would choose to follow his two brothers to the grave rather than that they should abandon their course of piety, and especially that relating to the prisoners in the Castle. The father too wrote

approvingly, at the same time advising them to obtain consent to visit the prisoners from the Chaplain who had charge of them, and also to seek the approbation of their Bishop. This advice was acted upon; the Chaplain approved of their design, and the Bishop expressed himself as highly pleased about it.

Thus strengthened by sympathy and commendation, Wesley and his little band proceeded with their self-denying works, not, however, without meeting with much persecution from outsiders. Vehement efforts were made to detach its members, not only by idle youths, but by men of position and learning; violence, threats, and persuasion induced several of the little band to limit their partaking of Holy Communion to three times a year.

In 1732 Wesley wrote a sermon on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for the use of his pupils, in which he shows the duty of all Christians to communicate as often as they can. He says that, with "the first Christians, the Christian sacrifice was a constant part of the Lord's day service; and that, for several centuries, they received it almost daily, four days a week always, and every saint's day besides." He further asserts that the Church of England has taken "all possible care that the sacrament be duly administered wherever the Common Prayer is read, every Sunday and holiday in the year," and that those who do not receive it at least twice in the year are liable to excommunication.

In the same month in which Wesley wrote his sermon, his mother addressed to him a letter, from which we extract the following:—

"The young gentleman you mention seems to me to be in the right concerning the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. I own I never understood by the *real presence* more than what he has elegantly expressed, that 'the Divine nature of Christ is there eminently present, to impart, by the operation of His spirit, the benefits of his death to worthy

receivers.' And surely the Divine presence of our Lord, thus applying the virtue and merits of the great atonement to each true believer, makes the consecrated bread more than a sign of Christ's body; since, by His so doing, we receive, not only the sign, but with it the thing signified—all the benefits of His incarnation and passion. But still, however this Divine institution may seem to others, to me it is full of mystery."

To which John replies—

"One consideration is enough to make me consent to your judgment concerning the Holy Sacrament; which is, that we cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present in it without allowing either con- or transubstantiation. But that His Divinity is so united to us then, as He never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me."

This is perhaps the clearest definition Wesley ever gave of his view of the doctrine, disavowing alike transubstantiation and consubstantiation, while speaking of a union of the Divinity with the believer in that sacrament, the *manner* of the union being a mystery. Wesley republished the sermon fifty years later, and his doing so confirms the opinion that in no essential matter had his theology changed.

About this time, or perhaps a year or two earlier, Wesley became acquainted with the eminent nonjuror, William Law, the author of the two books which had made such a deep impression on his mind. Law was living in seclusion near London, though he occupied the position of a spiritual physician to whom many people brought their difficulties and those of their friends.

"You would have a philosophical religion," he said to Wesley, "but there can be no such thing. Religion is the most plain, simple thing in the world. It is only, *we love Him, because He first loved us.*" Wesley, on one occasion, confessed to him that he felt greatly dejected, because he saw so little fruit from his labours.

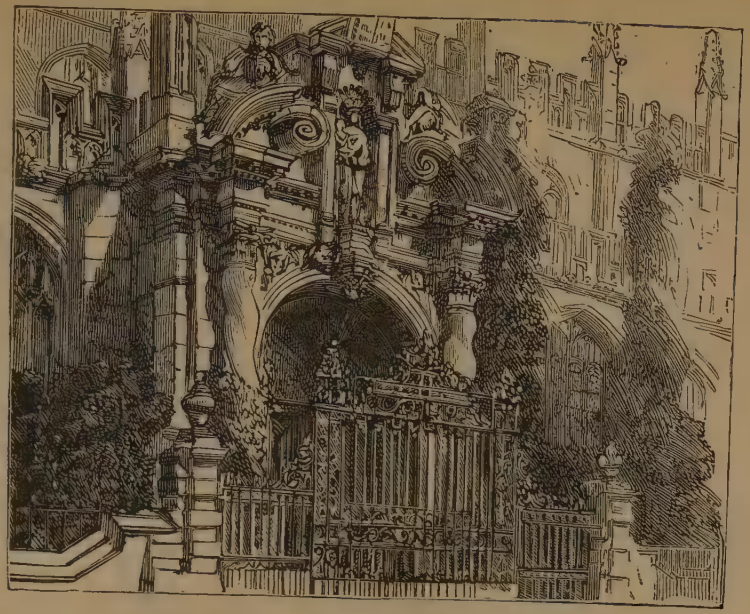
"My dear friend," replied Law, "you reverse matters from their proper order. You are to follow the Divine Light, wherever it leads you, in all your conduct. It is God alone that gives the blessing. I pray you always mind your own work, and go on with cheerfulness; and God, you may depend upon it, will take care of His. Besides, sir, I perceive you would fain convert the world. But you must wait God's own time. Nay, if, after all, He is pleased to use you only as a hewer of wood or a drawer of water, you should submit—yea, you should be thankful to Him that He has honoured you so far."

Twice or thrice in the year John and Charles Wesley walked the whole distance from Oxford to London to visit this good man, who became, to the elder brother at least, as an oracle. But later their views differed widely, for Law became a mystic and disciple of Jacob Behmen.

Meantime there appeared in Fogg's *Weekly Journal* an article condemning and maligning the motives and deeds of the Methodists, which, amongst other things, said:—

"As these Methodists have occasioned no small stir in Oxford, so there has not been wanting a variety of conjectures about them. Some are apt to ascribe their gloomy and disconsolate way of life to want of money; thus, being denied the enjoyment of those things they chiefly desire, they are weighed down by an habitual sorrow. . . . Others tax their characters with hypocrisy, and suppose them to use religion only as a veil to vice; and indeed if we should give credit to the several tales related of them, their greatest friends would be ashamed to stand in their defence. Others judge that their way of life is owing to enthusiasm, madness, and superstitious scruples. Among their own party, they pass for religious persons and men of extraordinary parts; but they have the misfortune to be taken by all who have ever been in their company for madmen and fools."

Such were some of the scandalous charges brought against



THE PORCH, ST. MARY'S CHURCH, OXFORD.

the Oxford Methodists,[1] together with others which are too scurrilous to be mentioned.

Wesley attempted to meet these shameful attacks by drawing up the following list of queries, which were in fact a body of articles, for no mere nominal Christian could possibly answer them in the negative.

The chief of the questions are :—

"Whether we may not try to do good among the young gentlemen of the University; particularly whether we may not endeavour to convince them of the necessity of being Christians, and of being scholars?

"Whether we may not try to convince them of the necessity of method and industry, in order to either learning or virtue?

"May we not try to do good to those who are hungry, naked, or sick? If we know any necessitous family, may we not give them a little money, clothes, or physic, as they want?"

This appeal increased the number of both friends and foes; the former sent them money, the latter called a meeting among the seniors of the College, in order to consult on the best measures to stop the growth of *enthusiasm*.[2]

To show the spirit in which John Wesley met these attacks, we will quote from a letter to his father, written in December 1730.

"To-morrow night," he writes, "I expect to be in company with the gentleman who did us the honour to take the first notice of our society. I have terrible reasons to think he is

[1] This name soon clave to them more than any other. For doing everything in a methodical way was a very decided characteristic of theirs. It has been said that Mrs. Wesley was the true founder of the Methodists, for she inculcated the importance of Method from her sons' childhood.

[2] Dr. Whitehead says—"Mr. Wesley and his friends did not learn what was the result of this very pious consultation; but it was soon publicly reported, that Dr. —— and the Censors were going to blow up the Godly Club."

as slenderly provided with humanity as with sense and learning. However, I must not let slip this opportunity, because he is at present in some distress occasioned by his being about to dispute in the schools on Monday, though he is not furnished with such articles as he wants. I intend, if he has not procured them before, to help him to some arguments, that I may at least remove that prejudice from him, 'that we are friends to none but those who are as queer as ourselves.'"

In his sermon preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on January 1st, 1733, Wesley propounded in the plainest terms his famous doctrine of Christian perfection.

"The circumcision of the heart," said he, "is that habitual disposition of soul, which in the sacred writings is termed holiness, and which directly implies the being cleansed from sin, from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit; and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus; the being so renewed in the image of our mind, as to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect."

"This sermon," he said in 1765, "contained all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart."

In the same sermon he tells us that without the Spirit of God we can do no good, and this holiness of heart is only to be obtained by faith, "which is not only an unshaken assent to all that God hath revealed in Scripture, but in particular to those important truths, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree,' 'He is the propitiation for our sins,' etc."

Then follows, "Those who are thus, by faith, born of God, have also strong consolation through hope. This is the next thing which the circumcision of the heart implies; even the testimony of their own spirit with the Spirit, which witnesses in our hearts that they are the children of God."

Then, as if in answer to the accusation of his enemies, he adds that this heart religion does not forbid us, as some have

strangely imagined, to take pleasure in anything but God; to suppose this is to suppose the Fountain of Holiness is directly the author of sin; since He has inseparably annexed pleasure to the use of those creatures which are necessary to sustain the life He has given us. "But, at the same time, every good soldier of Christ will not only renounce the works of darkness, but every appetite too, and every affection, which is not subject to the law of God. Vain hope! that a child of Adam should ever expect to see the kingdom of God without striving, without agonising first, to enter in at the strait gate,—without a constant and continued course of general self-denial."

"This," adds Wesley, "is God's short and plain account of true religion and virtue. Other sacrifices from us He would not, but the loving sacrifice of the heart He hath chosen. And no creature shall be suffered to share with Him, for He is a jealous God."

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF THE RECTOR OF EPWORTH.

In the year 1733 John Wesley issued his first printed production, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week.*

These prayers, originally designed for the use of Wesley's pupils, showed some of the principles and aims of the Oxford Methodists.

"They longed for the love of God to be the sole actuating power in the use they made of their understanding, affections, senses, health, time, and talents; that God might always be present to their minds; that they might ever have awful thoughts of Him, and never mention His holy and reverend name unless on just, solemn, and devout occasions, nor even then without acts of adoration; and that they might glorify Him by every thought of their hearts, every word of their tongues, and every work of their hands, and by professing His truth, even to the death, if it should please Him to call them to it.

"They wished to be made all kindness and benignity, all goodness and gentleness, all meekness and long-suffering; and to be filled with the whole spirit of humility, and to have it the constant, ruling habit of their minds. They dreaded applause, and desired never to speak a word that might tend to their own praise, unless the good of others required it. They endeavoured to abstain from all pleasures which did not prepare them for taking pleasure in God.

"They acted upon the principle of excluding none from their charity who were the objects of God's mercy. They embraced

all occasions to assist the needy, to protect the oppressed, to instruct the ignorant, to confirm the wavering, to exhort the good, and to rebuke the wicked. They wished to look upon the failings of their neighbours as if they were their own, and never revealed them but when charity required, and then with tenderness and compassion.

"Space forbids further reference to these prayers. Suffice it to say that, for reverential feeling, simplicity and beauty of expression, scriptural sentiment, Christian benevolence, and earnest longings for the highest holiness; for adoration, penitence, deprecation, petition, thanksgiving, and intercession—they have no superiors, perhaps hardly any equals, in the English language."[1]

After the death of Morgan, it appeared probable, says Southey, that Wesley would soon follow him to that world, the preparation for which they seemed to consider not merely as the most important, but as the sole business of this. Hard study, exercise carried sometimes in his journeys beyond his strength, the exertion of frequent preaching and earnest discourse, fasting upon all the appointed days of the Ancient Church, and a most abstemious diet at all times, had reduced him to an alarming condition, and at last he was awakened one night by the breaking of a blood vessel. Evidently thinking himself in great danger, he wrote in his diary this cry to the Almighty: "Oh, prepare me for Thy coming, and come when Thou wilt."

The poor mother at Epworth suffered a good deal of anxiety about the health of her two Oxford sons, and, whilst writing hearty commendation of their work, could not refrain from the motherly expostulation—

"I don't know how you may have represented your case to Dr. Huntingdon. I have had occasion to make some observation in consumptions, and am pretty certain that several symptoms of that disorder are beginning upon you,

[1] Tyerman.

and that unless you take more care than you do, you will put the matter past dispute in a little time. But take your own way; I have already given you up, as I have some before which once were very dear to me. Charles, though I believe not *in* a consumption, is in a fine state of health for a man of two or three and twenty! It is a great pity that folks should be no wiser, and that they can't fit the mean in a case where it is so obvious to view that none can mistake it that do not do it on purpose."

John placed himself under the direction of medical men, and after awhile recovered.

About this time Samuel accepted the mastership of Tiverton School, and, before removing so far westward, went to Epworth to visit his parents, where his two brothers joined him, that all the family might be assembled together for the last time upon earth. The aged Rector, who had been failing for a long time, was solicitous that John should, if possible, obtain the living and be his successor, his chief reasons being anxiety that the good he had effected in the parish should not be lost by the luke-warmness of his successor, and also that his wife and daughters might not be left homeless upon his death. John seems to have given no decided answer at the time; however, after his return to Oxford, he wrote to his mother—

"You observed when I was with you that I was very indifferent as to the having or not having the living of Epworth. I was indeed utterly unable to determine either way; and that for this reason: I know if I could stand my ground here, and approve myself a faithful minister of our blessed *Jesus*, by honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, then there would not be a place under the Heaven like this for improvement in every good work. But whether I can stem the torrent which I saw then, but see now much more, rolling down all sides upon me, that I know not. It is true there is One who can yet either command the great water-flood that it

shall not come nigh me, or make a way for His redeemed to pass through. But then something must be done on my part; and should He give me even that most equitable condition, 'According to thy faith be it unto thee,' yet how shall I fulfil it? Why, He will look to that too, my father and you helping together with your prayers that our faith fail not."

An absence of some little time from Oxford showed how soon the effects of all his exertion might be lost when his presence was withdrawn from his little band of associates, for by the time he returned the Methodists had diminished in number from twenty-seven to five. "One of his (Wesley's) pupils confessed that he was becoming more and more afraid of singularity; another had studied some of Mr. Locke's writings, which had convinced him of the mischief of regarding authority; a third had been converted from fasting by a fever and a physician."[1]

Some of the twenty-seven appear to have been ladies, but the five who remained steadfast during their leader's absence were all men. These things made John consider seriously what the consequences of his singularity were. As regards himself, it was evident they were diminution of fortune, loss of friends and of reputation.

"As to my fortune," said he, "I well know, though perhaps others do not, that I could not have borne a larger than I have. For friends, they are either trifling or serious; if triflers, fare them well, a noble escape; if serious, those who are more serious are left. And as for reputation, though it be a glorious instrument of advancing our Master's service, yet there is a better than that,—a clean heart, a single eye, and a soul full of God. A fair exchange, if by the loss of reputation we can purchase the lowest degree of purity of heart."

John now considered the Epworth matter more in reference to the well-being of his own soul, arguing that where he could be most holy himself, there he could most promote the holiness of others; to which his father answered that even at Oxford he

[1] Southey.

might have promoted holiness much more than he had done, if he had taken the right method.

"For," said the old man, "there is a particular turn of mind for these matters, great prudence as well as great fervour. I cannot allow austerity or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness, nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life. We are to 'let our lights shine before men,' and that not merely through the chinks of a bushel for fear the wind should blow it out; the design of lighting it was that it might 'give light to all who are in the house' of God. And to this academical studies are only preparatory."

Very touching and eloquent are the father's concluding words—

"We are not to fix our view on one single point of duty, but to take in the complicated view of all the circumstances in every state of life that offers. Thus in the case before us, put all the circumstances together; if you are not indifferent whether the labours of an aged father, for above forty years in God's vineyard, be lost, and the fences of it trodden down and destroyed;—if you consider that Mr. M. must in all probability succeed me if you do not, and that the prospect of that mighty Nimrod's coming hither shocks my soul, and is in a fair way of bringing down my grey hair with sorrow to the grave;—if you have any care for our family, which must be dismally shattered as soon as I am dropt;—if you reflect on the dear love and longing which this poor people has for you, whereby you will be enabled to do God the more service, and the plenteousness of the harvest, consisting of near two thousand souls, whereas you have not many more souls in the University;—you may perhaps alter your mind, and bend your will to His, who has promised if in all our ways we acknowledge Him, He will direct our paths."

Samuel, on the other hand, set before John his own example, in having twice taken important steps in life at the desire of

his father; he also told John that, having taken Orders, he was solemnly engaged to undertake "the cure of souls before God and His High Priest and His Church."[1]

Wesley, in reply to his father and brother, argued as if his own salvation would be rendered impossible at Epworth. He could not, he said, stand his ground there for a month "against intemperance in sleeping, eating, and drinking; his spirit would thus be dissolved; the cares and desires of the world would roll back upon him, and while he preached to others he should be a castaway himself." Freedom from trifling acquaintance was necessary for him; he dreaded, as the bane of piety, the company of good sort of men who were lukewarm Christians.

"They undermine insensibly," says he, "all my resolutions, and quite steal from me the little favour I have. I never come from among these saints of the word (as John Valdesso calls them) faint, dissipated, and shorn of all my strength, but I say, 'God deliver me from a half Christian.'"

He stood in need of the close religious companionship he had at Oxford, and there, too, he had none of the cares of the world; his income was provided for him; there was no anxiety about the things of this world; there, too, he endured that contempt which is a part of the cross that every man who would follow his Saviour must bear.[2]

Much good, also, he declared was to be done to others by his continuance at Oxford; "the schools of the prophets were there: was it not a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain, than to purify a particular stream?" And in reference to Epworth's being a wider sphere of action, where he would have the charge of two thousand souls, he cried, "Two thousand souls! I see not how any man living can

[1] Southey.

[2] To which Samuel replied, "What you say of contempt is nothing to the purpose, for if you go to Epworth, I can answer for it you shall in a competent time be despised as much as your heart can wish."

THE HIGH OXFORD.

take care of an hundred. If any stress be laid upon the love of the people of Epworth, I ask how long will it last? Only till I come to tell them plainly that their deeds are evil, and to make a particular application of that general sentence, to say to each, '*Thou art the man!*' Alas, sir, do I not know what love they had for you at first? And how have they used you since? Why, just as every one will be used whose business it is to bring light to them that love to sit in darkness!" And to the last part of his father's letter he replied thus, "As for the flock committed to your care, whom for many years you have diligently fed with the sincere milk of the word, I trust in God your labour shall not be in vain, either to yourself or them. Many of them the Great Shepherd has, by your hand, delivered from the hand of the destroyer, some of whom are already entered into peace, and some remain unto this day. For yourself, I doubt not, but when your warfare is accomplished, when you are made perfect through sufferings, you shall come to your grave, not with sorrow, but as a ripe shock of corn, full of years and victories. And He that took care of the poor sheep before you were born will not forget them when you are dead."

Samuel now saw that it was useless to urge his brother any more about the Epworth living, but he persisted in declaring it to be his duty to undertake some special cure of souls. "The order of the Church," he said, "stakes you down, and the more you struggle will hold the faster. You must, when opportunity offers, either perform that promise or repent of it: *utrum mavis?* which do you prefer?"

John admitted the force of his ordination vow, but denied that it had this meaning, and finally wrote to the Bishop who ordained him, asking whether he had, at ordination, engaged himself to undertake the cure of a parish or not?

The Bishop's answer was—"It doth not seem to me that, at your ordination, you engaged yourself to undertake the cure of any parish, provided you can, as a clergyman, better

serve God and His Church in your present or some other station."

In telling his brother of this answer John adds, "Now that I can, as a clergyman, better serve God and His Church in my present station I have all reasonable evidence."

There the matter rested, according to some of Wesley's biographers; but Tyerman tells us that before his father's death, which took place two months afterwards, John did actually apply for the Epworth living, but was not successful, and in support of this assertion he brings forward a letter from Wesley's friend Broughton,[1] who was curate of the Tower in London, stating what efforts had been made on his behalf (and presumably at his request) "in attempting what, if crowned with success, might prove a means of making our declining friend (the Rector of Epworth) end his days in peace."

"But where is the obstacle?" wrote this friend. "Why, my Lord of London, who is usually consulted by the Minister of State[2] on such occasions, spoke some disadvantageous things of you once in the presence of St. John" (Viscount Bolingbroke, whose intercession they were asking for); "but I could not but observe to our friend that the misrepresented strictness of life, which gave occasion for those disadvantageous things to be said of you, was so far from being an objection to your being favoured by a Christian Bishop, that I humbly hoped it would turn to your good account, inasmuch as over-exactness of behaviour was the sign of a tender and well-regulated mind."

However, the friendly pleading was in vain; the application was unsuccessful, and presently the Epworth living was given to another.

And now comes the closing scene in the life of the "Father of the Wesleys." John and Charles were with the old man during the last stage of his illness. A few days before he died he said to them—

[1] Published in the *Wesleyan Times*, October 28, 1861.

[2] The Epworth living was a gift of the Crown.

"The weaker I am in body, the stronger and more sensible support I feel from God. There is but a step between me and death. To-morrow I would see you all with me round this table, that we may once more drink of the cup of blessing before we drink it new in the kingdom of God. 'With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I die.'"

"The next day he was so weak and full of pain," says Southey, "that he could not receive the elements without difficulty, and often repeated, 'Thou shakest me, thou shakest me.'

"He had no fear of death, and the peace of God which he enjoyed appeared sometimes to suspend his bodily sufferings, and when they recurred, to sustain his mind above them. When, as nature seemed spent and his speech was failing, his son John asked him whether he was not near Heaven, he answered, 'Yes, I am,' distinctly, and with a voice of hope and joy. After John had used the commendatory prayer, he said, 'Now you have done all'; these were his last words, and he passed away so peacefully and insensibly, that his children continued over him a considerable time in doubt whether or not the spirit was departed. Mrs. Wesley, who for several days, whenever she entered his chamber, had been carried out of it in a fit, recovered her fortitude now, and said her prayers were heard, for God had granted him an easy death, and had strengthened her to bear it."

Charles, writing to his absent brother Samuel of his father's last hours, said that immediately after communicating there followed the most visible alteration in his father. "He appeared full of faith and peace, which extended even to his body, for he was so much better that we almost hoped he would have recovered. The fear of death he had entirely conquered, and at last gave up his latest human desires of finishing Job, paying his debts, and seeing you. He often laid his hand upon my head and said, 'Be steady. *The*

Christian faith will surely revive in this kingdom; you shall see it, though I shall not.' To my sister Emily he said—'Do not be concerned at my death, God will then begin to manifest Himself to my family.'"

"How patriarchal the scene!" exclaims a writer. "We are reminded of the words of the dying Jacob, 'Behold, I die,

SAMUEL WESLEY.

but God will be with you.' How prophetic the language! How fulfilled to the very letter, both in regard to his family and the nation!"

Seven years later, in reviewing the great revival which took place at Epworth, as he preached to the people from his

father's tombstone, John Wesley exclaimed, referring to that father :—

"Oh ! let none think his labour of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear. Near forty years did my father labour here, but he saw little fruit of his labour. I took some pains among the people too, and my strength also seemed spent in vain ; but now the fruit appeared. There was scarcely any in the town, on whom my father or I had taken any pains formerly, but the seed sown so long since now sprang up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins."

CHAPTER XI.

PROPOSAL TO GO OUT TO GEORGIA.

IMMEDIATELY after the death of John Wesley's father, in April 1735, most of the little band of Oxford Methodists were widely scattered. Gambold was a clergyman at Stanton-Harcourt; Ingham became a curate in Essex; Whitefield,[1] though not ordained, went on an evangelistic tour to Gloucester, Bristol, and other places; Broughton was chaplain at the Tower; and the two Wesleys repaired to the metropolis, and became the guests of James Hutton's father in Westminster.

Young Hutton was nineteen years old; he had met the Wesley brothers at Oxford, and had invited them to visit him. His father was an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, but not being able to take the oaths at the accession of George I., he had resigned his Church preferments, and now kept a boarding-school in a house next door to that of Wesley's brother Samuel.[2] Here on Sunday evenings the venerable man held meetings, at which he read and prayed and sung with penitents; and here Wesley preached a sermon on "One thing is needful," which was the means of converting both James Hutton and his sister.

Now, just at this time Dr. John Burton, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was taking great interest in the colonisation

[1] It was through Charles Wesley that Whitefield, then a servitor at Oxford, joined the Methodists. He had noticed the devout conduct of the Wesleys, with the ridicule to which they were subject, and seized a chance opportunity of becoming acquainted with Charles, who became his spiritual father.

[2] Tyerman's *Life and Times of Wesley.*

of Georgia, and he met Wesley in London, and introduced him to General Oglethorpe. This remarkable man, the friend of Johnson, the patron of the Wesleys, the founder of the youngest of our American colonies, and the "delightful old beau" of Hannah More, was the son of Sir Theophilus Oglethorpe, of Goldalming, and an Irish mother, from whom he inherited not a few of the characteristics of her countrymen. He was a patron of literature; he had been one of the late Rector of Epworth's chief subscribers to his book on Job; a soldier, a philanthropist, a legislator, and, as he was a wonderfully active man, at forty he had the experience of several average lives; he had been at Oxford; in the English army; he had, under Prince Eugène, taken part in battles which, after nearly half a century, he retraced with undimmed memory for the benefit of Warton and Johnson; and, still young, he had become a member of Parliament. His parliamentary career showed a foreshadowing of the labours of Howard. The state of the prisons in that day was something fearful. No criminal of any grade is now punished as was a debtor in the last century. Oglethorpe's sympathies were first kindled by the sufferings of a friend in the Fleet,[1] and were not extinguished with the misfortune that excited them; he brought the perpetrators of the atrocities committed in these prisons before a parliamentary committee, celebrated alike by pen and pencil. Thomson, with better feeling than poetry, describes

> "The generous band,
> Who, touched by human woe, redressive searched
> Into the horrors of the gloomy gaol,
> Where misery moans unpitied and unheard,
> Where sickness pines, where thirst and hunger burn,
> And poor misfortune feels the lash of vice."

"And Hogarth, with more graphic power, depicts the skulking gaoler cowering before the committee, while his half-

[1] J. Wedgewood.

naked victim points out the instruments of torture which had possessed so dreadful a significance for him. The misery which Oglethorpe witnessed drove him to seek not alleviation but cure. He resolved to give the Fleet and the Marshalsea scope and subsistence in the forests of the New World; and a large tract of fertile and well-watered land to the south of South Carolina, over which the jurisdiction of England was still merely nominal," seemed to him and his friends the right spot in that sunny clime in which to plant the children of misfortune whom they had released from prison, but who were still without food and shelter. Accordingly, on the 9th of June 1732, a charter was obtained from George II. "erecting this thin slice of America into the province of Georgia, and appointing Oglethorpe and twenty other gentlemen (of whom Dr. Burton was one) trustees to hold the same for the period of one-and-twenty years 'in trust for the poor.' The benevolence of England was aroused." The trustees gave liberally, the Bank of England presented £10,000, the House of Commons voted an equal amount, and the total sum, easily raised, was £36,000.

The first emigrants, one hundred and fifty in number, taken out by Oglethorpe as commander, were accompanied by the Rev. Henry Herbert, a clergyman of the Church of England. On their arrival at the high bluff on which Savannah is now erected, the colonists encamped and began to build their town. Every freeholder was allotted fifty acres of ground, five of which were near Savannah and forty-five farther off. Thus did the Commonwealth of Georgia begin; and the humane reformer of prison life found himself already the father of a State. The Indians showed themselves to be friendly, and made an alliance with the colony. It seemed to Oglethorpe that a door was open for the conversion of the Indians, and nothing was wanting but a minister who understood their language.

The next company of emigrants who were sent to Georgia were poor persecuted Germans from Salzburg, who had been

led to renounce Popery and embrace the Reformed religion. Thousands had fled from the fearful persecutions at Salzburg, and others were still in prison there, fed with bread and water, and employing themselves in praying and singing psalms. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel heard of these poor persecuted Protestants, and proposed to them to emigrate to Georgia. A section of the poor people gladly accepted the offer, and on October 31st, 1733, set out for Georgia, arriving there in the month of March. They were met by Oglethorpe, and chose a settlement twenty-one miles from Savannah, where there were "rivers, little hills, clear brooks, cool springs, a fertile soil, and plenty of grass." The spot which they chose, and to which they gave the name of Ebenezer, was surrounded by vast forests of cedars, walnuts, cypresses, and oaks, with wild vines running to the top of the highest trees. As to game, there were eagles, turkeys, roebucks, goats, deer, wild cows, horses, hares, partridges, and buffaloes without number. The Salzburghers built tents made of the bark of trees, constructed roads and bridges, set up religious services, were furnished with domestic utensils and with cattle, and were soon a prosperous community.

Oglethorpe next came over to England, bringing with him some Indians to invigorate the confidence of England in the destiny of Georgia. All went well, Parliament continued its benefactions, the new colony prospered.

The next emigrants who went out to Georgia were a party of Scotch Highlanders, then a company of Moravians, and then a number of men with whom we are now more directly interested; for it was proposed by Dr. Burton and General Oglethorpe that Wesley should go with them, on a mission to the infant colony and to the friendly Indians. If he went, he was to go as a Missioner of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and it was Dr. Burton's wish that his brother Charles should go also. Whilst they were still at Oxford the doctor

had thought how advisable it would be to send to Georgia men like the Wesleys, inured to hardness of life, full of zeal, and wishful for hard work. Charles was not ordained; if he went, therefore, it was proposed that he should go as General Oglethorpe's secretary.

At first John peremptorily refused to entertain the proposal, and chiefly upon his mother's account. When many objections which he made were answered, and some difficulties which he started were removed, he mentioned the grief it might give his mother. "I can be," said he, "the staff of her age, her chief support and comfort."

"Will you go if your mother's consent can be obtained?" he was asked.

He thought this would be impossible, but went to Epworth to lay the proposal before her, upon which she replied in a manner worthy of the mother of the Wesleys.

"*Had I*," said she, "*twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more.*"

Still Wesley did not even then consent to go until he had consulted other friends, the most important of whom were probably William Law and Samuel Wesley. Both these approved of the plan; most likely Samuel thought it well that he should engage in a work which called for so much zeal, that the excess of it which had led him into extravagances might find full employment. It was indeed his growing asceticism which made John long for removal from the temptations of the world, and he had a very mistaken idea of the labours of a missionary to the heathen. In a letter dated October 10th, 1735, he gives his reasons for going to Georgia.

"My chief reason is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its

unpleasing truths. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore willing to receive the Gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God.

"A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice; especially when most of those temptations are removed which here so easily beset me. It will be no small thing to be able, without fear of giving offence, to live on water and the fruits of the earth. An Indian hut affords no food for curiosity, no gratification of the desire of grand or new or pretty things. The pomp or show of the world have no place in the wilds of America.

"Further, I hope from the moment I leave the English shore, under the acknowledged character of a teacher sent from God, there shall be no word heard from my lips but what properly flows from that character; and the same faithfulness I hope to show in dispensing my Master's goods, if it please Him to send me to those who, like His first followers, have all things common. What a guard is here against that root of evil, the love of money, and all the vile attractions that spring from it!

"I then hope to know what it is to love my neighbour as myself, and to feel the powers of that second motive to visit the heathens, even the desire to impart to them what I have received—a saving knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. I have been a grievous sinner from my youth up, and am yet laden with foolish and hurtful desires; but I am assured, if I be once converted myself, God will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren, and to preach His name to the Gentiles.

"I cannot hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there. I shall lose nothing I desire to keep. I shall still have food to eat and raiment to put on; and if any man have a desire of other things, let him know that the

greatest blessing that can possibly befall him is to be cut off from all occasions of gratifying those desires which, unless speedily rooted out, will drown his soul in everlasting perdition."

We take exception to some of the sentiments and expressions used in this letter; still, as it stands, it discloses very plainly what was the mind of its writer at that time.

Wesley's heart was indeed set upon righteousness; he desired above everything to know God, "which is life eternal," and he was eager to lay aside everything which might detain him and hinder the achievement of his purpose. And though his chief motive was the "saving of his own soul," his chief dread that of "everlasting perdition," by the practice of a holy life he was proceeding on a way in which he would be certain, sooner or later, to have further light. For it is true, that if any one will *do* His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine.

So Wesley, and his brother Charles also, consented to go to Georgia; but they were not suffered to depart without many expostulations from their friends.

One, who was an unbeliever, said to Wesley—

"What is this, sir? Are you turned Quixote too? will nothing serve you but to encounter windmills?"

"Sir, if the Bible be not true," calmly replied the other, "I am as very a fool and madman as you can conceive; but if it be of God, I am sober-minded. For He has declared, 'There is no man that hath left house, or friends, or brethren, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in the present time, and in the world to come everlasting life.'"

The young men's uncle, Matthew Wesley, was a physician in London, and he sometimes made light of holy things. One day, when Charles was dining with him, he made fun about John's "apostolical project," as he called it.

"When the French found any remarkably dull fellow among them," he said, "they sent him to convert the heathen."

But Charles checked his raillery by repeating—

> "To distant lands the apostles need not roam,
> Darkness, alas! and heathen are at home."

Two days before the brothers sailed, John fulfilled one of his father's last wishes by presenting to the Queen a copy of his *Dissertations on the Book of Job*, upon which occasion he received "many good words and smiles."

CHAPTER XII.

ON BOARD SHIP.

"TUESDAY, October 14, 1735, Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen's College, Oxford; Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant in London, who had offered himself some days before; my brother Charles Wesley, and myself, took boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia. Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings), nor to gain the dross of riches or honour; but singly this, to save our souls—to live wholly to the glory of God. In the afternoon we found the *Simmonds* off Gravesend, and immediately went on board.

"Wednesday and Thursday we spent with one or two of our friends, partly on board and partly on shore, in exhorting one another to shake off every weight and to run with patience the race set before us."[1]

Let us glance at the writer of these lines as he paces the deck of the *Simmonds*, sometimes conversing with his friends, and sometimes rapt in meditation. He is a little slender man, but his step is firm and his appearance vigorous and muscular. His face is a very fine one—a clear, smooth forehead; an aquiline nose; an eye "the brightest and most piercing that can be conceived," and a fresh complexion; his hair is long and carefully dressed.

Let us turn to his companions. Little need be said of his brother Charles, the sweet hymn-writer, known of all who sing God's praises, whether in church or chapel, throughout the English-speaking world. He is small too, as we have seen,

[1] *Wesley's Journal.*

and he is also near-sighted and abrupt in his manners; but he is affectionate, of a lively disposition, and gifted with "sparkling wit and humour." It was said of him later that "with his wit he silenced infidels, quelled mobs, confounded magistrates, priests, and bishops. Naturally timid, religion made him as bold as Luther or Knox. He could face mobs without fear, and sing sweetly in the midst of storms." The same writer says that, as a preacher, Charles was superior to John. He intended to be a college tutor all his life, but Providence marked out other work for him. He has just been ordained deacon by Bishop Potter.

Then there is Benjamin Ingham, a young Yorkshireman, twenty-three years of age, who for the last three months has been preaching in the villages surrounding London with singular success.

"Fast and pray," wrote Wesley to him in the beginning of September, "fast and pray; and then send me word whether you dare go with me to the Indians." Ingham at first thought there was enough to do at home, but a fortnight after he acquiesced in Wesley's proposal.

Charles Delamotte is a young man of twenty-one (the son of a Middlesex magistrate), who is so attached to Wesley, that when he heard he was about to embark for Georgia, he determined to go with him, and to act as his servant. To this, naturally enough, his father strongly objected, and offered to settle him in a handsome business; but the youth was obstinate, and, after obtaining a half-consent from his parents and family, set sail with Wesley, bent upon serving him as a son in the gospel, and enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Then there is a much older man, David Nitschmann, who was born in Moravia, and is now in the sixtieth year of his age. "In 1720 a remarkable revival of religion took place in the town where David lived, but by the intervention of the Jesuits, the meetings of the new converts were prohibited, and

many who attended them were imprisoned in stables, cellars, and other offensive places.[1] A police officer entered Nitschmann's house, where one hundred and fifty of these godly people were assembled, and seized all the books within his reach. The congregation at once struck up a stanza of one of Luther's hymns—

> "'If the whole world with devils swarmed,
> That threatened us to swallow,
> We will not fear, for we are armed,
> And victory will follow.'

Twenty persons, including David, all heads of respectable families, were arrested and sent to gaol. For three days David was deprived of food, and was so cruelly ironed that the blood spurted from his nose and mouth and oozed from his very pores. After some time he escaped from his horrid dungeon, and fled for safety to his Moravian friends at Herrnhuth."

David is now a Moravian bishop, and, accompanied by about thirty Moravians, is on his way to visit the congregation in Georgia.

We must not omit to mention the central figure of Oglethorpe, of whom, about half a century later, Hannah More wrote—"He is much above ninety years of age, and the finest figure you ever saw. He perfectly realises all my ideas of Nestor. His literature is great, his knowledge of the world extensive, and his faculties as bright as ever. He is quite a *preux chevalier*, heroic, romantic, and full of the old gallantry."

As a younger man, as indeed we see him on board the *Simmonds*, though the very soul of benevolence and honour, though brave and loyal, and full of enthusiastic feeling, he is irascible, and sometimes rash, talkative, and somewhat boastful.

We are told the following story of him. During the voyage

[1] Tyerman.

to America, Wesley, hearing an unusual noise in the General's cabin, entered to inquire the cause, on which the angry soldier cried—

"Excuse me, Mr. Wesley, I have met with a provocation too great to bear. This villain Grimaldi" (pointing to his Italian servant) "has drunk nearly the whole of my Cyprus wine, the only wine that agrees with me, and several dozens of which I have provided for myself. But I am determined to be revenged. The rascal shall be tied hand and foot, and be carried to the man-of-war; for I never forgive."

"Then," said Wesley with great calmness, "then I hope, sir, you never sin."

Oglethorpe was confounded, his vengeance was gone; he put his hand into his pocket, pulled out a bunch of keys and threw them at Grimaldi, saying, "There, villain, take my keys and behave better for the future."

On another occasion, when some of the officers and gentlemen on board were annoying Wesley and his friends, with whose strictness of life and religious services they were displeased, Oglethorpe indignantly exclaimed—

"What mean you, sirs? Do you take these gentlemen for tithe-pig parsons? They are gentlemen of learning and respectability! They are my friends, and whoever offers an affront to them insults me!"

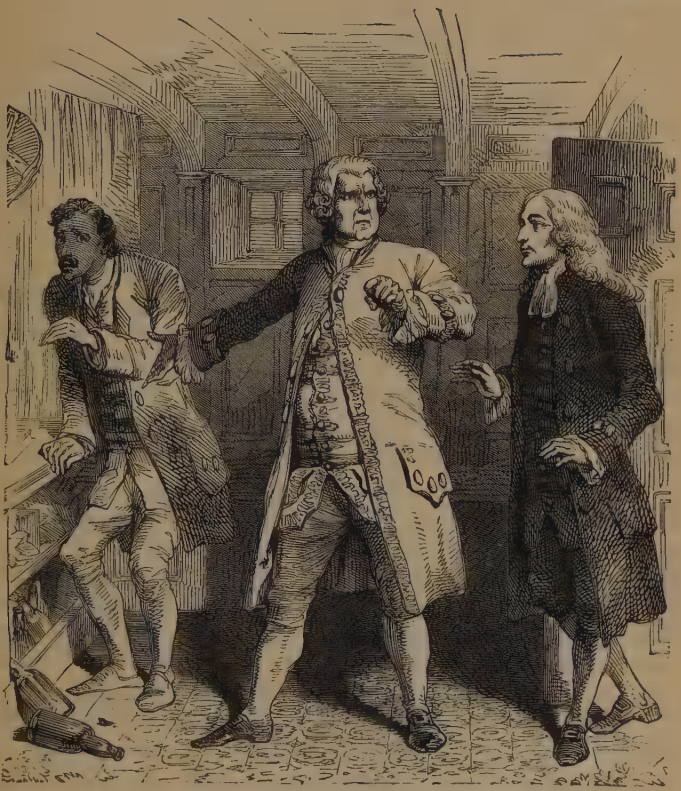
This was quite enough; ever afterwards the Methodists were treated with respect, both by the officers and passengers.

Wesley had not been more than a day or two at sea when he began to learn German, in order that he might be able to converse with the Germans on board, who from the first seemed to have impressed him with their piety; and Nitschmann and some of the other Germans began to learn English.

Whilst Wesley had been at Oxford he had always been restrained, perhaps unconsciously, by some regard for appearances; but now, when that restraint was no longer felt, he and

his companions began to put their ascetic principles in full practice. He says in his Journal—

"Believing the denying ourselves, even in the smallest



GENERAL OGLETHORPE AND HIS SERVANT.

instances, might, by the blessing of God, be helpful to us, we wholly left off the use of flesh and wine, and confined ourselves to vegetable food, chiefly rice and biscuit."

After a while he adds: "Finding nature did not require so frequent supplies as we had been accustomed to, we agreed to leave off suppers;" and then Wesley, having slept on the floor one night because his bed had been damaged in a storm, thought he should not find it needful to sleep in bed any more. His next experiment was whether life might not as well be sustained by one sort of food as by variety.[1] He and Delamotte accordingly tried with bread, as being the staff of life, and they found they continued to be vigorous and hearty. This caused him to exclaim—

"Blessed are the pure in heart; to them all things are pure; every creature is good to them, and nothing to be rejected. But let them who are not thus pure use every help and remove every hindrance, always remembering that he that despiseth little things shall fall by little and little." "At this time," his biographers say, "he had only attained to the spirit of bondage unto fear, and he found that all his senses were ready to betray him into sin, upon every exercise of them."

In this spirit he wrote from on board to his brother Samuel, entreating him to banish all such poison from his school as the classics that were usually read there, and introduce Christian authors in their place, for it was his duty to instruct his scholars, "not only in the beggarly elements of Greek and Latin, but much more in the Gospel." "Fanaticism always comes to this," says Southey, "in its progress: first it depreciates learning, then it would destroy it. There have been Christians, as they believed themselves, who would have burnt the Alexandrian library upon the same logic as the Caliph Omar, with no other difference than that of calling their book by a Greek name instead of an Arabic one."

Very strictly did Wesley and his friends portion out their time. From four in the morning till five they used private prayer: from five until seven they read the Bible together, carefully comparing it with the writings of the earliest ages.

[1] Southey.

At seven they breakfasted, and at eight they had public prayers. From nine till twelve John Wesley learnt German, and Delamotte studied Greek, Charles wrote sermons, and Ingham instructed the children on board. At twelve they met, and each gave an account of what he had done since their last meeting, and of what he intended to do before they left. About one they dined, and from dinner until about four they read to or exhorted those of whom each had taken especial charge. There were evening prayers at four, when the second lesson was explained, or the children were catechised and instructed before the congregation. From six to seven each read in his cabin to a few of the passengers. At seven Wesley joined the Germans in their public service, whilst Ingham read between the decks to as many as liked to listen; at eight they met again to instruct and exhort. Between nine and ten they retired to rest, being no doubt thoroughly fatigued, and Wesley said "neither the waving of the sea, nor the motion of the ship, could take away the refreshing sleep which God gave us."

It was a rough season, and presently a terrible storm came on, or rather three storms, the last of which was by far the worst. We will give Wesley's description of it. He had been saying that during the previous one he had felt "much ashamed of his unwillingness to die," and the behaviour of the Germans must therefore have made all the more impression upon him.

"Sunday, 25th (of January). At noon our third storm began. At four it was more violent than before. Now indeed we could say, 'The waves of the sea were mighty and raged horribly. They rose up to the Heavens above, and clove down to hell beneath.' The wind roared round about us, and (what I never heard before) whistled as distinctly as if it had been a human voice. The sea not only rocked to and fro with the utmost violence, but shook and jarred with so unequal grating a motion, that one could not but with great difficulty keep one's hold of anything, nor stand a moment without it.

Every ten minutes came a shock against the stern or side of the ship which one would think should dash the planks in pieces. At this time a child privately baptised before was brought to be received into the Church. It put me in mind of Jeremiah's buying the field when the Chaldeans were on the point of destroying Jerusalem, and seemed a pledge of the mercy God designed to show us, even in the land of the living.

"We spent two or three hours after prayers in conversing suitably to the occasion, confirming one another in a calm submission to the wise, holy, gracious will of God. And now a storm did not appear so terrible as before. Blessed be the God of all consolation!

"At seven I went to the Germans. I had long observed the great seriousness of their behaviour. Of their humility they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers, which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying 'it was good for their proud hearts,' and 'their loving Saviour had done more for them.' And every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown down, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the psalm wherewith their sermon began, the sea broke over, split the main-sail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sung on. I asked one of them afterwards, 'Were you not afraid?' He answered, 'I thank God, no.' I asked, 'But were not your women and children afraid?' He replied mildly, 'No, our women and children are not afraid to die.'

THE GERMANS IN THE STORM.

"From them," continues Wesley, "I went to their crying, trembling neighbours, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial between him that feareth God and him that feareth Him not. At twelve the wind fell. This was the most glorious day which I had hitherto seen."

Happy Wesley! It was as if in the midst of the storm he had caught a glimpse of those who had heard the Master's words, "Peace, be still," and for him too "*immediately there was a great calm.*"

The next day he wrote—"We enjoyed the calm. I can conceive no difference comparable to that between a smooth and rough sea, except that which is between a mind calmed by the love of God, and one torn up by the storms of earthly passions."

In nine days more they anchored in the Savannah River.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AMERICA.

On February 5th, 1736, "Between two and three in the afternoon," wrote Wesley in his Journal, "God brought us all safely into the Savannah River. We cast anchor near Tybee Island, where the groves of pines, running along the shore, made an agreeable prospect, showing, as it were, the bloom of spring in the depth of winter."

The next morning, about eight o'clock, Wesley and his friends first set foot on American ground. This was a small uninhabited island, near Tybee.

Very impressive must have been the scene! General Oglethorpe led the little missionary band to a hill, where they all knelt down to give thanks; and after that, they took boat for Savannah, which was now a town of forty houses, standing on a flat bluff, rising forty or fifty miles above the crescent river flowing at its base. On the eastern side of the town was a swamp, on the west a wood, and on the south a forest of pines, fourteen miles in length. The principal buildings were a court-house, which served also for a church, a log-built prison, a storehouse, a public mill for grinding corn. All the houses were of the same size. There were still standing the four beautiful pines under which Oglethorpe encamped when he landed with the first, and which for nearly twelve months he used as a sleeping place. At about half a mile's distance was a small Indian town, in which at times large numbers of the Creek nation were accustomed to assemble.

"When the rest of the people were come to the shore,"

wrote Wesley, "we called our little flock together to prayers. Several parts of the second lesson (Mark vi.) were wonderfully suited to the occasion, in particular the account of the courage and sufferings of John the Baptist; our Lord's directions to the first preachers of His gospel, and their toiling at sea and deliverance, with these comfortable words, 'It is I, be not afraid.'"

The next day the well-known Moravian elder, August Gottlieb Spannenburg, came to meet Wesley, and bid him welcome to his new sphere of labour. Wesley asked his advice about the work which lay before him. Spannenburg said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?"

Wesley was surprised at such questions, and did not know what to answer.

Spannenburg observed this, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?"

"I know He is the Saviour of the world," replied Wesley.

"True," said the other; "but do you know He has saved you?"

"I hope He has died to save me," answered Wesley.

"Do you know yourself?" asked Spannenburg.

"I do," said Wesley; but in his Journal afterwards he wrote, "but I fear they were vain words."

Two days after, when the conversation was renewed, Wesley was the questioner, and drew from his new friend an autobiography which must have impressed him deeply, and perhaps partly explains the great influence which this and other Moravians had afterwards over his mind.

"At eighteen years old," said Spannenburg, "I was sent to the University of Jena, where I spent some years in learning languages and the vain philosophy which I have now long been labouring to forget. Here it pleased God, by some that

preached His word with power, to overturn my heart. I immediately threw aside all my learning but what tended to save my soul. I shunned all company and retired into a solitary place, resolving to spend my life there. For three days I had much comfort here, but on the fourth it was all gone. I was amazed, and went for advice to an experienced Christian. When I came to him I could not speak. But he saw my heart and advised me to go back to my house and follow the business Providence called me to. I went back, but was fit for nothing. I could neither do business, nor join in any conversation. All I could say to any one was Yes, or No. Many times I could not say that, nor understand the plainest thing that was said to me. My friends and acquaintance looked upon me as dead, came no more to me, nor spoke about me.

"When I grew better, I began teaching some poor children. Others joining with me, we taught more and more, till there were above thirty teachers and above two hundred scholars. I had now invitations to other Universities. But I could not accept of any, desiring only, if it were the will of God, to be little and unknown. I had spent some years thus when Professor Breithouse, of Halle, died; being then pressed to remove thither, I believed it was the will of God and went. I had not been long there before many faults were found, both with my behaviour and preaching; and offences increased more and more, till, after half a year, a petition against me was sent to the King of Prussia, who sent an order to the commander at Halle, in pursuance whereof I was warned to leave the city in forty-eight hours. I did so, and retired to Herrnhuth to Count Zinzendorf.

"The village of Herrnhuth contains about a thousand souls, gathered out of many nations. They hold fast the discipline as well as the faith and practice of the Apostolical Church. I was desired by the brethren there last year to conduct sixteen of them to Georgia, where two lots of ground are assigned us,

and with them I have stayed ever since." Wesley asked whither he was to go next? To which the good man replied, "I have thoughts of going to Pennsylvania. But what God will do with me, I know not. I am blind. I am a child. My Father knows, and I am ready to go wherever He calls."

After quitting the ship, Wesley and Delamotte lodged with the German Moravians at Savannah, till the house which was intended for them should be erected. "We had now," said Wesley, "an opportunity, day by day, of observing their whole behaviour; for we were in one room with them from morning to night, unless for the little time spent in walking. They were always employed, always cheerful themselves, and in good humour with one another. They had put away all anger and strife, and wrath and bitterness, and clamour and evil speaking. They walked worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, and adorned the gospel of our Lord in all things." And when he had been present at one of their consultations concerning the affairs of their Church, in which, after hours spent in conference and prayer, they proceeded to the election and ordination of a bishop, he said the great simplicity and solemnity of the whole almost made him forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine himself in one of the assemblies "where form and state were not, but Paul the tent-maker, or Peter the fisherman presided,—yet with the demonstration of the spirit and of power."

Wesley had been afraid, says Southey, upon leaving England, that he should never again have so many faithful friends as he had left there. He now exclaimed, "But who knoweth the mercy and power of God? From ten friends I am awhile secluded, and He hath opened me a door into the whole Moravian Church."

Nine days after their arrival in America, Wesley and his friends were visited by Tomo-Chachi (the Indian chief whom Oglethorpe had taken to England some time before) and half-a-dozen other Indians.

The young clergymen met them attired in their gowns and cassocks.

"I am glad you are come," said Tomo-Chachi, speaking through a woman-interpreter. "When I was in England I desired that some would speak the great Word to me; and my nation then desired to hear it; but now we are all in confusion. Yet I am glad you are come. I will go up and speak to the wise men of our nation; and I hope they will hear. But we would not be made Christians as the Spaniards make Christians; we would be taught before we are baptised."

"There is but One—He that sitteth in Heaven—who is able to teach men wisdom," replied Wesley. "Though we have come so far, we know not whether He will please to teach you by us or no. If He teach you, you will learn wisdom, but we can do nothing."

The chief's wife, who had accompanied her husband, gave a jar of milk to the missionaries, as emblematic of her wish that they might feed the Indians with milk, for they were but children, and a jar of honey, with the hope that the missionaries would be sweet to them.

During the summer Wesley had a long conference with some of the Chicasaws. The Chicasaw creed was not without a certain poetic beauty of its own.

"We believe," said the spokesman, "that there are four beloved things—the clouds, the sun, the clear sky, and He that lives in the clear sky. We think of them always wherever we are. We talk of them and to them, at home and abroad, in peace, in war, and after the fight, and wherever and whenever we meet together."

"Their belief," says Wedgewood, "that 'He that lived in the clear sky had two with him—three in all'—one cannot but take to imply some reminiscence of Christian teaching. Whether He was the Creator of the rest they could not tell; 'who hath seen?'—but they believed He made man. They were ignorant whether He loved him. They did not doubt

His power to save them from their enemies, but knew not if He would exercise it.

"To Wesley's offer of a book that would tell them many things about 'the Beloved Ones' above, they returned a faint answer. They were now occupied with war; if ever a more convenient season came, they would hear him. Yet they seem to have felt a certain amount of sympathy with the Christians. The interpreter told Wesley that they had said they knew what he was doing at the funeral of a young girl who had died lately—he had been speaking to the 'Beloved Ones' to take up her soul. They believed also, they told Oglethorpe, that the time would come when the black and white man would be one. There is one other passage which, if it does not indicate Christian teaching, is full of interest: 'There are but a few whom the "Beloved One" teaches from a child, and is in them, and takes care of them, and teaches them. They know these things, and our old men practise, therefore they know; but I do not practise, therefore I do not know.'"

This, with one trifling exception, was the sole conference Wesley ever had with any members of the race he had crossed the Atlantic to convert. The real Indians portrayed here are not so extremely unlike his ideal Indians as we should expect; but the glowing expectations he had brought with him were chilled, not so much by what they now said as by what he heard and saw of them besides. The "little children eager to learn and anxious to do the will of God," were thus described by him before he left America:—"They have no religion, no laws, no civil government. They are all, except perhaps the Choctaws, liars, gluttons, drunkards, thieves, dissemblers. They are implacable, unmerciful, murderers of fathers, murderers of their own children—it being a common thing for a son to shoot his father or mother because they are old and past labour, and for a woman to throw her child into the next river because she will go with her husband to the war."

Painful indeed must the contrast have been to Wesley between his anticipation and experience.

"Oglethorpe and Wesley seem not to have entirely understood each other as to the object of his journey," says the above-named writer,[1] putting into few words what some biographers have said in many. "He had come to America to preach to the Indians; Oglethorpe designed for him the position, wholly incompatible with this, of parish priest at Savannah. He made several attempts to leave Savannah for an expedition among them, which were precluded by the impossibility of finding a substitute for his duties there; but what is most noteworthy in this failure is the reason he gives for it—that he could not find any Indians on the continent of America who had the least desire of being instructed!

"There were about as many Indians in America desirous of being instructed in the Christian religion, we presume, as there were colliers in Kingswood or miners in Cornwall in that state of mind. But the evil influence of delusion survives delusion; the mind when it awakens from misconception cannot take up the position of mere ignorance, but recoils to an attitude equally unfavourable for correct judgment or effective action. It was well in this case that it was so: Wesley was destined to preach Christianity to heathens quite as savage as the Chicasaw Indians, and more accessible to his teaching."

Southey says, Wesley never seemed to have attempted the arduous task of learning the language.

When they commenced work in Georgia the brothers separated. Charles went with Ingham to Frederica, a settlement on the west side of the island of the Alatamaha, and he was the first to make the painful discovery that their mission was a failure.

Wesley, however, at first was pleased with his situation;

[1] J. Wedgewood.

he thought the place was pleasant and healthful, and even wrote to his mother saying he should be heartily glad if any poor and religious men or women of Epworth or Wroote would come out to him; inviting them with a promise of land enough, and of provisions till they could live upon its produce.

He was satisfied, too, with his reception, and the effect he produced. The people crowded to hear him, and when he saw their "deep attention and the seriousness which sate upon all their faces," he hoped that his preaching would not be in vain.

Yes, they welcomed him and heard him gladly when first he came amongst them, and if he had only had more tact, if he had only remembered Dr. Burton's warning, that the people among whom he was going were "babes in the progress of their Christian life, to be fed with milk instead of strong meat;" above all, if he had only had a saving knowledge of the redemption wrought for us and in us by our Saviour Christ, his would have been a very different work in America. As it was, he bewildered and alarmed the people by his hard and fast rules of life, his asceticism, his scrupulous adherence to the letter rather than the spirit of Church laws, and his want of tact and of the power to yield, when it was really unnecessary to be unyielding.

One of the ladies to whom he was introduced on his first landing, assured him that he would see as well-dressed a congregation on Sunday as most which he had seen in London. "I did so," he said afterwards, "and soon after took occasion to expound those Scriptures which relate to dress, and to press them freely upon my audience in a plain and close application. All the time that I afterwards ministered at Savannah, I saw neither gold in the Church nor costly apparel; but the congregation in general was almost constantly clothed in plain clean linen or woollen. All was smooth and fair and promising; many seemed to be awakened; all, all were full of respect and commendation." He taught one

school, and Delamotte another. Some of Delamotte's boys, who wore shoes and stockings, thought themselves superior to the poor fellows who were bare-foot. Delamotte was at a loss how to remedy this evil, but Wesley proposed to change schools for a time, that he might try to cure it. To effect this he one day went into the school without his shoes and stockings. The boys stared at him and at each other, but he said nothing, and only kept them to their work as usual. Before the week was over the boys who had no shoes and stockings took courage, and many more of them came to the school.

On another occasion, one of the richer colonists gave a ball, and Wesley arranged that the public prayers should begin at the same time; consequently, the Church was full, whilst the ball-room was so empty that the dancing could not proceed. But this made many people angry, and it seemed unnecessary that he should have excited their feelings in this way.

In his strict following of the rubric, in opposition to the practice of the English Church, he insisted upon baptising children by immersion, and refused to baptise them if their parents would not consent to that method. He would not allow some to be sponsors, because they were not communicants, and would not allow one who had been baptised by a dissenter, but who was a very holy man, to come to Holy Communion unless he would consent to be re-baptised by himself, whilst, on the other hand, it was said that he allowed those who had been baptised by the Roman Catholics to come. He was accused, too, of making his sermons satires upon particular persons; and the fear of being preached at made the members of his congregation stay away.

One plain speaker said to him, "The people say they are Protestants, but, as for you, they cannot tell what religion you are of; they never heard of such a religion before, and they do not know what to make of it."

Some were displeased also because Wesley did what is so frequently done now—divided the public prayers according to the original appointment of the Church, which, he told the people, was still observed in a few places in England. He performed the morning service at five, the communion office, with the sermon, at eleven, and the evening service at three. He also diligently visited his parishioners from house to house during the hours between twelve and three, when they could not work because of the heat. And he also formed some of his more serious parishioners into a little society, who should assemble once or twice a week for the purpose of improving, instructing, and exhorting one another. From these a smaller number was to be selected for "a more intimate intercommunion," which might be forwarded partly by the clergyman's conversing singly with each, and partly by inviting them altogether to his house on Sunday afternoons.

CHAPTER XIV.

DISAPPOINTING EXPERIENCES.

Poor, hard-working young clergyman! Tyerman says, "He [Wesley] was looked upon as a Roman Catholic—(1) Because he rigidly excluded all Dissenters from the Holy Communion, until they first gave up their faith and principles, and, like Richard Turner and his sons, submitted to be re-baptised by him. (2) Because Roman Catholics were received by him as saints. (3) Because he endeavoured to establish and enforce confession, penance, and mortification; mixed wine with water at the sacrament; and appointed deaconesses in accordance with what he called the Apostolic Constitutions."

The opposition he met with sometimes was very great. Oglethorpe grew weary of the complaints which were made to him of both the Wesleys.

One wicked woman, whom John had offended, knocked him down one day—presumably when he was off his guard—and cut off from one side of his head the whole of those long locks of auburn hair which he had been accustomed to keep in the most perfect order. Perhaps he made more of this indignity than he need have done, for he preached to the people afterwards with his hair long on one side and short on the other, those sitting on the side which had been cut observing, "What a cropped head of hair the young parson has!"

We have said that Charles soon got into trouble at Frederica. He had been trying to reconcile quarrelling women, and he, too, had been baptising children by immersion. Some of the

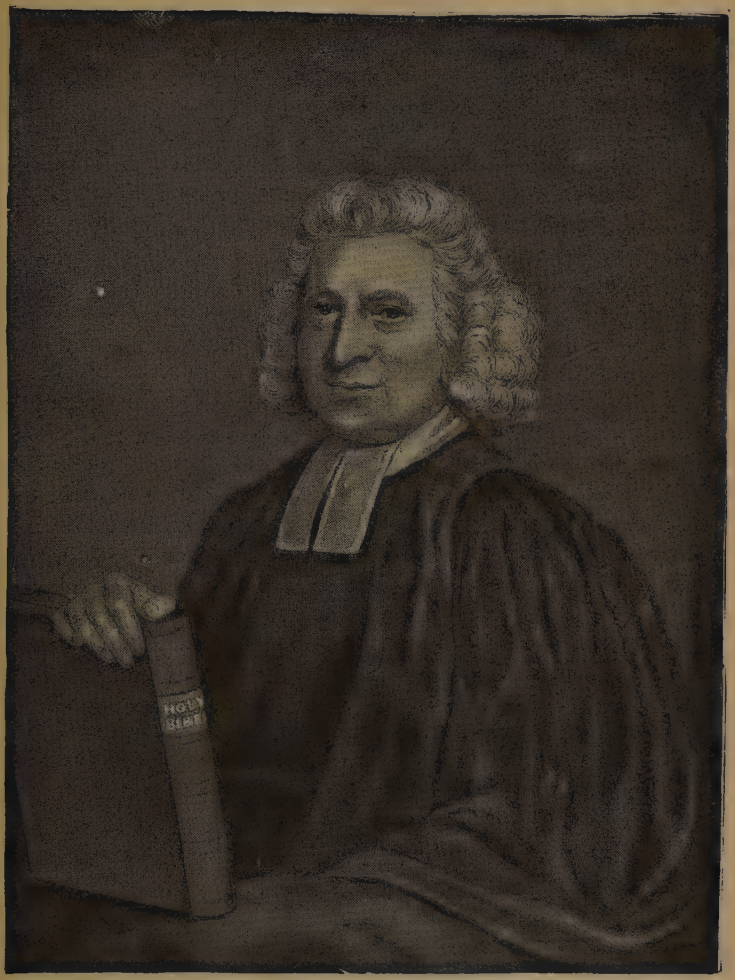
termagant women prejudiced General Oglethorpe against him, and the poor secretary was treated with coldness and charged with mutiny; while all the others were provided with boards to sleep upon, he was left to sleep upon the ground, and his very few well-wishers were afraid to speak to him.

Wesley and Delamotte went over to his assistance, and spent six days in trying to settle the miserable squabbles that had sprung up among the palmetto huts of Frederica. But not long after his return to Savannah, his brother, weari[illegible] of his life at Frederica and of the false-heartedness of the people, unexpectedly turned up. Places were exchanged, and John and Delamotte started off to the forsaken flock. They only seem to have stayed there one busy month, however, before they were back at Savannah.

Charles embarked for England the following month, July, and John returned to Frederica for twelve weeks. There he set up a small library; and as several Germans, through not understanding the English tongue, were unable to join in the public service, he agreed to meet them every day at noon in his own house, where, in their own language, he expounded to them a chapter of the New Testament, and prayed with them. But finding his prospects of doing good at Frederica became less and less, he returned to Savannah at the end of October, and remained there most of the time he stayed in America.

Ingham went to England next, to see if he could get more help. Then General Oglethorpe's troubles began; the trustees accused him of misapplying funds, and of abusing his entrusted powers, but Wesley wrote to him—

"Perhaps in some things you have shown you are but a man: perhaps I myself may have a little to complain of; but oh! what a train of benefits have I received to lay in the balance against it! I bless God that ever you were born. I acknowledge His exceeding mercy in casting me into your hands. I own your generous kindness all the time we were at



REV. CHARLES WESLEY.

sea. I am indebted to you for a thousand favours here. Though all men should revile you, yet will not I."

Sinister rumours were circulated about Wesley as well, but the trustees wrote fully acquitting him.

After this occurred a very painful episode in Wesley's life, which was one of the chief causes of his leaving Georgia. The story is a long one, as told by the different biographers, who differ not a little in their narrative of facts and motives.

It is well known that clever men, and good men too, often show a lamentable want of common-sense when they have to choose for themselves a wife. And even the most ardent admirers of John Wesley will allow that he failed conspicuously whenever he attempted the matter.

Perhaps at first it lightened his dreary work in Savannah, when the pretty niece of Mr. Causton, one of the principal inhabitants, showed an intense desire for more and more religious instruction. And when he fell ill, and she nursed him through his fever, and always dressed in simple white, because she knew—austere man as he was—he liked to see her in it, how was it possible that John could help falling in love with her? How should he know if some of the religious interest was simulated, and many of the lady's noblest qualities were assumed?[1] It is said by some that he asked her to marry him; others again indignantly deny this, and say he was only thinking of doing so; at all events, when Delamotte asked him if it was his intention to marry her, Wesley waived an answer. But presently he consulted David Nitschmann, the Moravian Bishop, whose answer was, "Marriage is not unlawful; but whether it is now expedient for you, and whether this lady is a proper wife for you, ought to be maturely weighed."

[1] "Mr. Moore says Wesley never came to the determination to marry her. Dr. Whitehead says he did intend to marry her. Southey agrees with Whitehead. Mr. Watson presumes that Mr. Moore is a better authority than Whitehead. Mr. Jackson seems to think the same."—TYERMAN.

Wesley now resolved to submit the matter to the elders of the Moravian Church. When he entered the house in which they were met together, he found Delamotte in the midst of them, and, on naming his business, Nitschmann said—

"We have considered your case; will you abide by our decision?"

After some hesitation, Wesley replied, "I will."

"Then," said the Moravian bishop, "we advise you to proceed no further in the matter!"

"The will of the Lord be done!" replied Wesley.

Whether it was that the lady, Miss Sophy Hopkey, heard of this, or that she was herself heartily tired of Wesley's coolness as a lover, is uncertain, but he tells us himself how the matter was decided by her. In his Journal he writes—

"February 5th, 1737.—One of the most remarkable dispensations of Providence towards me began to show itself this day. For many days after I could not at all judge which way the scale would turn; nor was it fully determined till March 4th, on which day God commanded me to pull out my right eye; and, by His grace, I determined to do so: but, being slack in the execution, on Saturday, March 12th, God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not." Further explaining matters by writing—

"March 8th.—Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, a person not remarkable for handsomeness, neither for greatness, neither for wit, or knowledge, or sense, and least of all for religion; and on Saturday, March 12th (four days after), they were married at Purrysburg,—this being the day which completed the year from my first speaking to her."

And on March 7th, he says:—"I walked with Mr. Causton to his country lot, and plainly felt that, had God given me such a retirement with the companion I desired, I should have forgot the work for which I was born, and have set up my rest in this world."

Wesley was about thirty-four at that time, and doubtless the

disappointment was most painful.[1] Forty-nine years after he wrote in reference to this event, "I remember when I read these words in the church at Savannah, 'Son of man, behold, I take from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke,' I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter a word more. But our comfort is, He that made the heart can heal the heart."

He also wrote and told his brother Samuel, who replied, "I am sorry you are disappointed in the match, because you are very unlikely to find another."

This courtship and its *dénouement*, in which there was certainly no more harm than the simplicity of Wesley in submitting the matter to the Moravian elders, and the lady's rashness in marrying another man after only four days' engagement, was unfortunately mixed up with subsequent troubles.

It is supposed by some of Wesley's biographers that when Miss Hopkey became Mrs. Williamson she no longer cared to appear as good and religious as she had previously striven to be thought by Wesley. And indeed she erred so much on the other side that Wesley, as her clergyman, found it necessary to tell her of certain things which he found wrong in her behaviour. This made her extremely angry, and three days later her uncle, accompanied by the Bailiff and the Recorder, came to demand an explanation. Wesley hinted to them that he might find it necessary to repel her from the Holy Communion. He also told her uncle what the people of Savannah were saying against his magisterial proceedings, which no doubt greatly enraged Mr. Causton.

Some weeks passed, and, as Mrs. Williamson did not choose to alter her ways, Wesley refused to allow her to communicate.

The next day a warrant was issued against him for defaming the character of Sophia Williamson, and refusing to administer to her the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a public

[1] Tyerman.

congregation without cause, for which injury the husband laid his damages at £1000. When Wesley appeared before the Recorder and one of the Bailiffs, he maintained that the giving or refusing the Lord's Supper was a matter purely ecclesiastical, and therefore he would not acknowledge their power to interrogate him concerning it. He was told that he must, however, appear at the next court held for Savannah. Meantime Mr. Causton, having become very angry, required him to assign in writing his reasons for refusing to allow his niece to communicate. This Wesley did in the following letter to Mrs. Williamson:—

"At Mr. Causton's request I write once more. The rules whereby I proceed are these: *So many as intend to partake of the Holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before.* This you did not do.

"*And if any of these have done any wrong to his neighbour by word or deed, so that the congregation be thereby offended, the Curate shall advertise him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord's table until he have openly declared himself to have truly repented.*

"If you offer yourself at the Lord's table *on Sunday*, I will advertise you, as I have done more than once, wherein you *have done wrong;* and *when you have openly declared yourself to have truly repented*, I will administer to you the mysteries of God."

Causton and his friends tried to make the people of Savannah believe that Wesley had acted from spite in treating his niece so harshly, because she had married some one else; and, indeed, Wesley seemed to have known that such a motive might be attributed to him in acting as he did; but, on the other hand, was he to lay himself open to the charge that, because of their previous relations, he overlooked, in her, conduct which he should have felt bound to notice in another?

Mr. Causton industriously read aloud to all who would hear

selected portions of Wesley's letters to him and his niece. In the midst of all this Wesley writes: "I sat still at home, and I thank God, easy, having committed my cause to Him, and remembering His word, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.'"

Then, at the request of several of the communicants, Wesley drew up a short statement of the case and read it after evening prayers in the open congregation. The whole of that week was occupied, we are told, by Causton in persuading, bribing, and otherwise corrupting the forty-four jurymen who were to compose the Grand Jury. When the court was formed on Monday, the 22nd, Causton, who, by-the-bye, was the chief magistrate in the town, gave a long and earnest charge to these jurymen *to beware of spiritual tyranny, and to oppose the new illegal authority which was usurped over their consciences.*

Mrs. Williamson's affidavit was read, and then Causton delivered to the Grand Jury a paper entitled "A List of Grievances," which, with some immaterial alterations, was "returned as a true bill, charging John Wesley with having 'broken the laws of the realm, contrary to the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his crown and dignity.' The indictment contained ten counts, of which the first was for speaking and writing to Mrs. Williamson against her husband's consent; the others related to his repelling her from the Communion, his division of the service, and his conduct respecting baptisms and burials. He appeared before the court, and declared that as nine of these counts related to his ecclesiastical matters, they were not within the cognisance of that tribunal; but that which concerned speaking and writing to Mrs. Williamson was of a secular nature, he said, and therefore he desired that it might be tried upon the spot where the facts complained of had occurred. But it was in vain that

he repeatedly demanded a hearing on this charge; and in this manner more than three months elapsed."[1]

But Wesley had still zealous friends. Even among the Jurors twelve persons were found who, in a paper addressed to the trustees, protested against the indictment as a scheme for gratifying personal malice by blackening Wesley's character. This, indeed, the whole affair seems to have been; again and again a further trial was delayed, until, after the seventh postponement,[2] the defendant, finding he could neither obtain justice nor be of any use as a clergyman under such conditions, gave up in despair and announced his determination to return to England. Upon this the magistrates asked him to give bail for his appearance when wanted, but this Wesley would not do; so, in return, they gave orders that he should not be permitted to leave the colony, and forbade any person to assist him in so doing. They also brought another clergyman to officiate in the parish, a Mr. Dixon, who was chaplain to some soldiers at Frederica.

That same evening Wesley, with four other fugitives who had reasons for wishing to leave the colony, started in an open boat for Port Royal, in South Carolina, which place they reached, after hard toiling and rowing by sea and many hardships by land, on December 6th, 1737. On the 8th Wesley was joined at Port Royal by Delamotte, when they took a small craft and started for the port of Charleston, which they reached on the 13th On the 22nd John Wesley quitted America, after having experienced the failure of many hopes, and learned many useful though painful lessons.

It seems that when he had actually left them, some of his late parishioners began to think more kindly and justly about him, for when his friend and successor, Whitefield,[3] arrived, they found some good things to say about him.

[1] Southey. [2] Rev. W. H. Daniels, M.A.

[3] Whitefield, the pupil of the Wesleys, sailed for Georgia a day or two before John Wesley arrived in England.

In a letter from Georgia, Whitefield says—"The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people, and he has laid a foundation that I hope neither man nor devils will ever be able to shake."

WESLEY'S CLOCK.

CHAPTER XV.

WESLEY'S RETURN TO ENGLAND.

It was natural that Wesley should feel depressed and be the subject of many heart-searchings during his return voyage to England, for he had had many disappointments and some bitter trials in America. Resolute had been his purpose, high his hopes, and ardent his zeal when he went out on his missionary expedition, yet he had accomplished little, and of that little recent events had tended to undo much. And now he was obliged to confess to himself that what he had thought his Heaven-sent mission had been a failure, and he recognised the fault might be, nay, probably was, in himself.

It was during a storm, as he was returning to England, that he discovered a great fear in his heart of death, and the discovery of that fear much disturbed him, for he knew that a Christian should not be afraid to die. Sadly he wrote in his Journal:—

"I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion; I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near: but let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled, nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'

> "'I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
> My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!'

"I think verily, if the Gospel be true, I am safe; for I not only have given and do give all my goods to feed the poor; I

not only give my body to be burned, drowned, or whatever God shall appoint for me; but I follow after charity (though not as I ought, yet as I can), if haply I may obtain it. I now believe the Gospel is true. 'I shall show my faith by my works,' by staking my all upon it. I would do so again and again a thousand times if the choice were still to make. Whoever sees this sees I would be a Christian. Therefore 'are my ways not like other men's ways.' Therefore I have been, I am content to be, 'a by-word, a proverb of reproach.' But in a storm I think, 'What if the Gospel be not true? Then thou art of all men most foolish.' . . . Oh, who will deliver me from this fear of death! What shall I do? Where shall I fly from it? Should I fight against it by thinking, or by not thinking of it? A wise man advised me some time since, 'Be still, and go on.' Perhaps this is best, to look upon it as my cross; when it comes, to let it humble me, and quicken all my good resolutions, especially that of praying without ceasing; and at other times to take no thought about it, but quietly to go on in the work of the Lord."

And then he reviewed the progress of his religious life. "For many years," he said, "I have been tossed about by various winds of doctrine. I asked long ago, 'What must I do to be saved?' The Scripture answered, Keep the commandments, believe, hope, love. I was early warned against laying, as the Papists do, too much stress on outward works, or on a faith without works, which, as it does not include, so it will never lead to true hope or charity. Nor am I sensible that to this hour I have laid too much stress on either. But I fell among some Lutheran and Calvinist authors who magnified faith to such an amazing size, that it hid all the rest of the commandments. I did not then see that this was the natural effect of their overgrown fear of Popery, being so terrified with the cry of merit and good works, that they plunged at once into the other extreme; in this labyrinth I was utterly lost, not being able to find out what the error was,

nor yet to reconcile this uncouth hypothesis, either with Scripture or common-sense. The English writers, such as Bishop Beveridge, Bishop Taylor, and Mr. Nelson, a little relieved me from these well-meaning, wrong-headed Germans. Only when they interpreted Scripture in different ways, I was often much at a loss. And there was one thing much insisted on in Scripture,—the unity of the Church, which none of them, I thought, clearly explained. But it was not long before Providence brought me to those who showed me a sure rule of interpreting Scripture, *consensus veterum: quod ab omnibus, quod ubique, quod semper creditum;* at the same time they sufficiently insisted upon a due regard to the one church at all times and in all places. Nor was it long before I bent the bow too far the other way, by making antiquity a co-ordinate, rather than sub-ordinate rule with Scripture; by admitting several doubtful writings; by extending antiquity too far; by believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient Church than ever were so; by not considering that the decrees of a provincial synod could bind only that province, and the decrees of a general synod only those provinces whose representatives met therein; that most of those decrees were adapted to particular times and occasions, and consequently when those occasions ceased, must cease to bind even those provinces. These considerations gradually stole upon me as I grew acquainted with the mystic writers, whose noble descriptions of union with God and internal religion made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid. But in truth they made good works appear so, too; yea, and faith itself, and what not? They gave me an entire new view of religion, nothing like any I had before. But, alas! it was nothing like that religion which Christ and his apostles loved and taught. I had a plenary dispensation from all the commands of God; the form was thus: Love is all; all the commands beside are only means of love; you must choose those which you feel are means to you, and use them as long as they

are so. Thus were all the bands burst at once; and though I could never fully come into this, nor contentedly omit what God enjoined, yet, I know not how, I fluctuated between obedience and disobedience; I had no heart, no vigour, no zeal in obeying, continually doubting whether I was right or wrong, and never out of perplexities and entanglements. Nor can I at this hour give a distinct account how or when I came a little back toward the right way; only my present sense is this, all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers, the mystics are the most dangerous; they stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them."

The returned missionary landed at Deal, and then solemnly recorded his own self-condemnation and sense of imperfect faith. "It is now," he said, "two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learnt myself meantime? Why—what I least of all expected—that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. *I am not mad*, though I thus speak; but *I speak the words of truth and soberness*, if haply those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am, so are they. Are they read in Philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I, too, have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold I give all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than them all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country. I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God shall please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me

acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can *know, say, give, do, or suffer*, justify me in His sight? If the Oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by the *Law* and the *Testimony*, all these things, though when ennobled by faith in Christ, they are holy and just and good, yet without it are dung and dross.

"This, then, I have learned in the ends of the earth—that I am fallen short of the glory of God; that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; . . . that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making an atonement for the least of those sins, which are more in number than the hairs of my head, that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment. . . . I have no hope but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He afterwards modified this strong statement by saying that, even then, he had "the faith of a *servant*, though not that of a son." But in his Journal, at the time, he continues:—"If it be said that I have faith [for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters], I answer so have the devils,—a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first manifested forth His glory: even then they in a sort believed on Him; but they had not then 'the faith that overcometh the world.' I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans; that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, 'I live not, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it [though many imagine they have it who have it not]; for whosoever hath it is freed from sin; the

whole body of sin is destroyed in him, he is freed from fear; 'having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hopes of the glory of God.' And he is freed from doubt; having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him; which spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God."[1]

And then Wesley came to England, where he found the ground prepared for his work, and spiritual teaching fitted for his need.

During his absence, Whitefield's more ardent nature had caused him to "outrun" the brothers whose earnest pupil he had been. Let us glance at his career hitherto. He was the son of a tavern-keeper, and was a poor servitor at Oxford when the devout conduct of the "Methodists" first attracted attention, and drew scorn and ridicule upon them. Whitefield desired much to make the acquaintance of the Wesleys, and one day, hearing of the sad plight of a poor woman who had attempted suicide in one of the workhouses, he sent an old apple-woman of the college to inform Charles Wesley, charging her not to tell him who sent her. But the old woman told, and Charles Wesley sent word to Mr. Whitefield to breakfast with him the next morning. Whitefield says—

"I thankfully embraced the opportunity, and, blessed be God! it was one of the most profitable visits of my life. My soul was at that time athirst for some spiritual friends to lift up my hands when they hung down, and to strengthen my feeble knees. He soon discovered it, and, like a wise winner of souls, made all his discourses tend that way." He put two

[1] "Yet on reflecting upon the time which he had spent in Georgia, he saw many reasons to bless God for having carried him into that strange land. There he had been humbled and proved; there he had learnt to know what was in his heart; there the passage had been opened for him to the writings of holy men in German, Spanish, and Italian tongues;—and there he had been introduced to the Church of Herrnhuth (the Moravians)."—SOUTHEY.

REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

books into Whitefield's hands, one of which, he says, "was wonderfully blessed to my soul." Wesley soon lent him another book, entitled *The Life of God in the Soul.* Whitefield says, "And though I had fasted, watched, and prayed, and received the Sacrament so long, yet I never knew what true religion was till God sent me that excellent treatise by the hands of my never-to-be-forgotten friend." In reading that book, in which he found it asserted that true religion is a union of the soul with God, or Christ formed within us, a ray of Divine light, he said, darted into his soul. But the vehemence of his disposition led him into all sorts of excesses in his desire to obtain the peace of God—whole days and weeks he lay prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer. He chose the worst food, affected mean apparel; he made himself remarkable by leaving off powder in his hair, when every one else was powdered; he wore woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes, as signs of humility. Some of the men whose servitor he was did not choose to be served by one so slovenly, and he therefore lost some of the pay on which he depended for support. "Other excesses injured his health: he would kneel under the trees in Christ Church Walk in silent prayer, shivering the while with cold, till the great bell summoned him to his college for the night; he exposed himself to cold in the morning till his hands were quite black; he kept Lent so strictly that, except on Saturdays and Sundays, his only food was coarse bread and sage tea, without sugar. The end of this was, that before the termination of the forty days, he had scarcely strength enough left to creep upstairs, and was under a physician for many weeks."[1]

At the end of a long illness he was able to believe in Christ, or, as he himself expressed it, "God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on His dear Son by a living faith, and, by the Spirit of adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, even to the day of everlasting

[1] Southey.

redemption. But oh! with what joy, joy unspeakable, even joy that was full of and big with glory, was my soul filled when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith, broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals—a day to be had in everlasting remembrance. At first my joys were like a spring-tide, and, as it were, overflowed the banks. Go where I would, I could not avoid singing of psalms almost aloud; afterwards they became more settled, and, blessed be God, saving a few casual intervals, have abode and increased in my soul ever since."

About that time, some one fearing lest the little society of Methodists at Oxford would be broken up for want of a superintendent, as the Wesleys were away in Georgia, wrote to a certain Sir John Philips, of London, who was ready to assist religious works with his purse, and recommended Whitefield as a proper person to be encouraged and patronised for that purpose. Sir John immediately gave him an annuity of £20, and promised to make it £30 if he would continue at Oxford, for he thought "if this place could be leavened with the vital spirit of religion, it would be like medicating the waters at their spring."

Whitefield's devout behaviour next attracted the attention of Dr. Benson, the Bishop of Gloucester, who told him that, although he had resolved not to ordain any one under twenty-three—Whitefield was only twenty-one—he should think it his duty to ordain him whenever he came for Holy Orders.

Whitefield was accordingly ordained thus early in life, and he preached his first sermon in the Church of St. Mary de Crypt, where many assembled to hear "the boy parson." "He preached like a lion," said one who heard him; a few mocked, but many were much impressed, and a complaint was made to the Bishop that he had driven fifteen mad. The prelate hoped that the madness might not be forgotten before the next Sunday.

Whitefield returned to his work at Oxford, took his degree, and hoped that he might do some good to the gownsmen: "to convert one of them would be as much as converting a parish."

The society grew under his care, but he was called away from time to time, to officiate at the Tower Chapel in London and elsewhere, his preaching being most successful, and making no little stir.

Then Charles Wesley returned from Georgia to procure assistance, and he wrote to Whitefield in a way which suggested that in his opinion Whitefield was the right person to go, and soon afterwards John wrote to him—

"Only Mr. Delamotte is with me," he said, "till God shall stir up the hearts of some of His servants, who, putting their lives in His hands, shall come over and help us, where the harvest is so great and the labourers so few. What if thou art the man, Mr. Whitefield?" In another letter, he asked, "Do you ask me what you shall have? Food to eat and raiment to put on; a house to lay your head in, such as your Lord had not; and a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Upon reading this, Whitefield said his heart leaped up within him, and he gave up all his fair prospects in England, and offered his services to General Oglethorpe and the Trustees for Georgia. His offer was promptly accepted, and before the vessel was ready in which he was going to sail, he went for a while to serve the Church of one of his friends at Stonehouse, where he enjoyed much sweet communion with God. The people of Bristol seemed to have heard of his wonderful ministry, and, after repeated invitations, he went there to preach. Southey says—

"Multitudes came on foot to meet him, and some in coaches a mile without the city; and the people saluted and blessed him as he passed along the street. He preached about five times a week to such congregations, that it was with great difficulty he could make way along the crowded aisles to the reading-desk. 'Some hung upon the rails of the organ-loft,

others climbed upon the leads of the church, and altogether made the church so hot with their breath, that the steam would fall from the pillars like drops of rain.' When he preached his farewell sermon, and said to the people that perhaps they might see his face no more, high and low, young and old, burst into tears. Multitudes followed him home weeping."

It was the same in London, where he next went. Clergymen begged him to come and preach their charity sermons, so large were the amounts collected after his sermons. He preached at Cripplegate, St. Anne's, and Foster Lane Churches at six in the morning, and assisted at the Sacrament; so many attending that the stewards found it difficult to carry the offerings to the Communion-table. The streets were filled with people, going to hear him before daybreak, with lanterns in their hands. They stopped him in the aisles and embraced him, they visited him in his lodgings to lay open their souls, and when he preached his farewell sermon, they wept and sobbed aloud.

And what was the secret of his power? He had natural gifts certainly, but they alone could not have availed to rouse men as he roused them to repent and turn to God. The answer must be that he preached the Gospel, and preached it with *power from on high.* He had himself felt the burden of sin, he had found forgiveness at the foot of the Cross, he longed for others too to share his joy and peace in believing—he was *intensely in earnest.* And we must consider too that the "boy parson" began his work at a time when there was great spiritual deadness in the Church; clergymen, as a rule, contented themselves with preaching a mild morality and loyalty to the King.

Of course there were many who were jealous of the eloquent young preacher, and doubtful of his doctrine; perhaps too of his ways. For Whitefield found, at that time, that he and the more serious Dissenters had much sympathy with each other, and he went much among them, rightly thinking that "the best way to bring them over was not by bigotry and railing, but by moderation, and love, and undissembled holiness of life.

And on their part they told him that if the doctrine of the New Birth and Justification by Faith were powerfully preached in the Church, there would be but few Dissenters in England."[1] But, as we have said, some of the clergy were alarmed at this doctrine, and doubtless they were glad when the young enthusiast had departed for Georgia.

Within a few days, however, of Whitefield's departure from London, John Wesley arrived there, to deepen and widen the impression Whitefield had made. "Had their measures been concerted," says Southey, "they could not more entirely have accorded. The first sermon which Wesley preached was upon these strong words, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;' and, though he himself had not reached the same stage in his progress as his more ardent coadjutor, the discourse was so high-strained, that he was informed he was not to preach again in that pulpit."

The next Sunday he preached at St. Andrew's, Holborn, and there also was informed that he was to preach no more.

Meantime, he met with three German Moravians, one of whom was Peter Böhler, a missionary who was going to Georgia, and he marks the day of that meeting in his Journal as one to be remembered.

[1] Southey.

CHAPTER XVI.

WESLEY'S CONVERSION.[1]

FOR some time now Charles Wesley had been in England, working and worrying over Georgia affairs. His unhappy state of mind will be seen by the following extract from his Journal:—

"January 22, 1737.—I called upon Mrs. Pendarvis while she was reading a letter of my being dead. Happy for me had the news been true! What a world of misery would it have saved me!"

In the month of February he was very ill, and while lying almost at death's door, Peter Böhler called upon him, and, after prayer, said to him—

"You will not die now. Do you hope to be saved?"

"Yes," replied Charles.

"For what reason do you hope it?"

"Because I have used my best endeavours to serve God."

Böhler shook his head and said no more, which made Charles Wesley feel very uncomfortable.

"What!" he said in his Journal, "are not my endeavours a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavours? I have nothing else to trust to."

Poor Charles! though his illness continued, he still worked hard with his "endeavours," praying much, reading, and agonising. Besides Böhler, there was a poor, ignorant man, named Bray, a Smithfield brazier, but a happy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, to whose house he was carried, and who showed him the way of faith more perfectly.

A poor but pious woman too spoke words which went

[1] See note on page 157.

home to his heart, but, as she humbly said, they were not her words, but Christ's. And at last Charles found "rest to his soul" in believing.

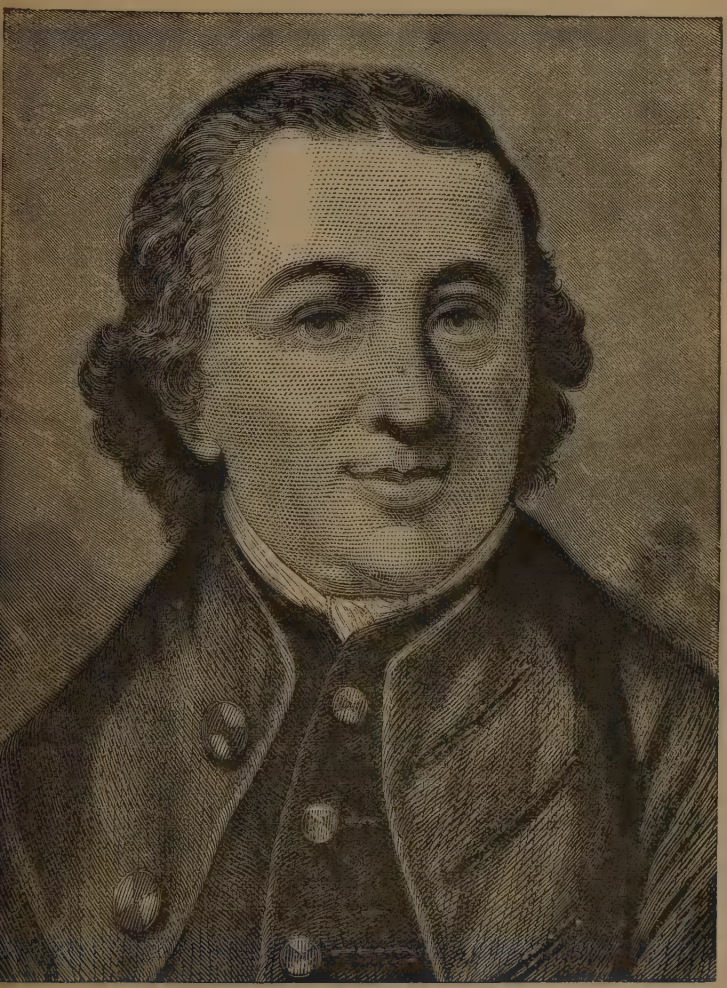
But to return to John Wesley. At first, after he became clearly convinced in his own mind of unbelief, he had scruples about continuing preaching, and consulted Böhler about the expediency of giving it up.

"By no means," replied Böhler. "Preach faith till you have it, and then *because* you have it, you will preach faith."

John accordingly preached faith in season and out of season, as the case might be, and very touching it is to read of the success of the message given by the messenger who was himself athirst for that of which he spoke.

He and Mr. Kinchin set out for Manchester, preaching and speaking to as many as they could upon their way. In his Journal, Wesley says, on Friday, 11th: "In the evening we came to Stafford. The mistress of the house joined with us in family prayer. The next morning one of the servants appeared deeply affected, as did the ostler before we went. Soon after breakfast, stepping into the stable, I spoke a few words to those who were there. A stranger, who heard me, said, 'Sir, I wish I was to travel with you,' and when I went into the house, followed me, and began abruptly, 'Sir, I believe you are a good man, and I come to tell you a little of my life.' The tears stood in his eyes all the time he spoke, and we hoped not a word which was said to him was lost. . . .

"Coming to Holms-Chapel about three, we were surprised at being shown into a room where a cloth and plates were laid. Soon after, two men came in to dinner. Mr. Kinchin told them, 'If they pleased, that gentleman would ask a blessing for them.' They stared, and as it were consented; but sat still while I did it, one of them with his hat on. We began to speak on turning to God, and went on, though they appeared utterly regardless. After a while their countenances changed, and one of them stole off his hat, and, laying it down behind



PETER BÖHLER.

him, said all we said was true; but he had been a grievous sinner, and had not considered it as he ought; but he was resolved, with God's help, now to turn to Him in earnest. We exhorted him and his companion, who now likewise drank in every word, to cry mightily to God, that He would send them help from His holy place."

At Manchester, on the Sunday, Wesley preached from St. Paul's words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Early the next day they left Manchester, feeling "fully determined to lose no opportunity of awakening, instructing, or exhorting any whom they might meet on their journey." At Knutsford, where they first stopped, all they spoke to thankfully received the word of exhortation. They pursued their journey; people to whom they spoke listened, were amazed, and wanted to hear more; others accompanied them part of their way on their journey. They reached Oxford again, rejoicing in having received so many fresh instances "of that great truth, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'"

On Easter Day, Wesley records, "I preached in our College Chapel, on 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' I preached in the afternoon, first at the Castle and then at Carfax, on the same words. I see the promise, but it is afar off."

At a meeting of his religious friends, his heart was so full that he could not confine himself to the forms of prayer which they were accustomed to use at such times; and from that time forth he resolved to pray indifferently with or without form, as the occasion and the impulse might indicate. Peter Böhler again talked to him about faith, and he was more and more amazed to hear the account the Moravian gave of the fruits of living faith, and the holiness and happiness with which it was attended. He began to study his Greek

Testament again, with confidence that he would be shown whether the doctrine was of God.

After a few weeks, Wesley met Böhler and his brother Moravians once more in London, and then assented to what Böhler said of faith, but could not understand "How a man could *at once* be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost." However, he searched the Scriptures again, and, examining more particularly the Acts of the Apostles, he says he was utterly astonished at finding scarcely any instances there of other than *instantaneous* conversions. Southey marvels that a man of Wesley's acuteness who had studied the Scriptures as he had, till the age of five-and-thirty, should have hitherto failed to see that the conversions they recorded were instantaneous, and necessarily so, because they were produced by plain miracles.

But still Wesley said to himself, "The Almighty wrought them thus in the first ages of the Church; but times are changed, and what reason is there to suppose He works them thus now?"

"But," he writes in his Journal, on Sunday, 22nd April, "I was beat out of this retreat too by the concurring evidence of several living witnesses, who testified God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them in a moment such a faith in the blood of His Son as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear into holiness and happiness. Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief!'"

Again he asked Peter Böhler whether he ought not to refrain from teaching others.

"No," was the answer; "do not hide in the earth the talent God hath given you."

So Wesley went on preaching "The Faith as it is in Jesus"—a strange doctrine which some who did not care to contradict, yet knew not what to make of.

His brother's illness caused Wesley to return to London, where he and between forty or fifty persons, including the Moravians, drew up the fundamental rules of "their society—in obedience to the command of God by St. James, and by the advice of Böhler." They were to be divided into several bands, or little companies, none consisting of fewer than five or more than ten persons; in these bands every one in order engaged to tell the others, at their meetings, as freely, plainly, and concisely as he could, the real state of his heart, with his several temptations and deliverances since the last meeting. On Wednesday evenings, at eight o'clock, all the bands were to have a conference, beginning and ending with hymns and prayer. Those who wanted to be admitted into this society, the headquarters of which were in Fetter Lane, were to be asked their motives, whether they would be entirely open, using no kind of reserve. Those who were received on trial were formed into separate bands, and some experienced person was appointed to assist them. After two months, if there appeared to be no objection to them, they were admitted into the society. Every fourth Saturday was to be observed as a day of general intercession; and on the Sunday "sevennight" following, a general love-feast should be held from seven till ten in the evening. Wesley was now united with the Moravians in doctrine, and well disposed to many parts of their discipline.

The Sunday following he records, "I preached at St. Lawrence's in the morning; and afterwards at St. Katherine's Cree Church. I was enabled to speak strong words at both; and was therefore the less surprised at being informed I was not to preach any more in either of those churches."

And on the following Tuesday he records, "I preached at Great St. Helen's, to a very numerous congregation, on 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall we not with Him also freely give up all things?' My heart was now so enlarged, to declare the love of God to

all that were oppressed by the Devil, that I did not wonder in the least when I was afterwards told, 'Sir, you must preach here no more.'"

It seems wonderful that the very man whose soul was full of sorrow because of his "evil heart of unbelief," was able so powerfully to preach the "Faith which is in Jesus," that crowds hung on his lips, whilst the affrighted clergy forbade his ever again occupying their pulpits.

Then Charles, as we have seen, found rest and peace in believing, and, three or four days after, John relates in his Journal how he also attained to faith:—

"In the evening [May 24] I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ—Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

It is interesting to read what immediately followed. Wesley began to pray with all his might for those who persecuted and despitefully used him. Then he openly testified to all present what he now felt in his heart. "But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith, for where is thy joy?' Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them according to the counsels of His own will."

Returning home, Wesley was buffeted with temptations; he cried out and they fled away, but to return again and again.

"I as often lifted up my eyes," he said, "and He sent me help from His holy place. And herein I found the difference

between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace; but then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now I was always conqueror."

Wesley considered the 24th of May 1738 the date of his conversion. Eighteen days afterwards, at St. Mary's, in Oxford, he preached his celebrated sermon on the text, "By grace are ye saved, through faith."[1] In this discourse, says Tyerman, he showed that the faith through which we are saved is not barely the faith of a heathen, who believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, who, in addition to the faith of a heathen, believes that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world; nor, thirdly, is it barely the faith which the apostles had while Christ was yet upon earth, although they so believed in Christ as to leave all and follow Him, had power to work miracles, and were sent to preach; but, fourthly, "it is a full reliance on the blood of Christ,—a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection,—a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, as given for us and living in us; and in consequence hereof, a closing with Him and cleaving to Him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, or, in one word, our salvation."

"The salvation obtained by such a faith is described as being a salvation—(1) From the guilt of all past sin; (2) from servile fear; (3) from the power of sin. The man having it is pardoned; he has the witness of the Spirit that he is a child of God; he is born again; and he lives without sin.

"Wesley further answers objections to this doctrine, and shows that to preach salvation by faith is not only to preach against holiness and good works; neither does it lead men into pride, nor drive them to despair. He maintains that never was the

[1] This sermon was published in the following November by James Hutton. Price 3d.

preaching of this doctrine more seasonable than now, and that nothing else can effectually prevent the increase of the Popish delusion. It was this which drove Popery out of the kingdom, and it is this alone that can keep it out. . . .

"In the same year Wesley published another sermon, 'On God's Free Grace,' in which he gave equal prominence to another great Bible truth—namely, 'That the grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is *free in all*, and *free for all*.' And then in defence of himself as a good Churchman, he issued a small 12mo pamphlet of sixteen pages, entitled, 'The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith and Good Works: extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England.' Here he shows that the doctrine of the Church is, that the sinner is justified by faith only; and yet this faith does not exclude repentance, hope, love, and fear of God; but shuts them out from the office of justifying. . . . Justification is the office of God only—a blessing which we receive of His free mercy, through the only merits of His beloved Son. He adds, 'The right and true Christian faith is not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments.' He maintains further that, without this true saving faith, the works we do cannot be good and acceptable in the sight of God. 'Faith gives life to the soul, and they are as much dead to God who want faith, as they are to the world whose bodies want souls. Without faith all we do is but dead before God, be it ever so glorious before man.'"

These are the great doctrines Wesley grasped and began to preach in 1738, and it was the preaching of these doctrines that led to one of the greatest revivals in religion which ever took place in the Church of Christ. But the preacher himself, after having been once heard to utter them, was forbidden to preach again in most of the pulpits in the churches of our land. A thousand pities it was that the clergy were themselves so far

from the True Light, that when it shone they knew it not, and when the voice of the Redeemer spoke through his servant the same message that was uttered long ago upon the shores of Galilee, they knew not that it was His voice which was proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation through faith in Him who died that we might live!

But, though the Wesleys were turned out of the churches, they still lived and worked in *the Church*, esteeming it all honour that they were permitted to suffer persecution for the kingdom of Heaven's sake. And one great result of their labours is that to-day, throughout the churches of the English Church, the message that they gave is, more or less, being preached to all its members.

CHAPTER XVII.

WESLEY'S ECCENTRICITIES.

It is always sad to see the weakness of great men, and we should like to draw a veil over some of the extravagances Wesley committed during this part of his career, but our duty as an historian must be done.

In the lives of all deep thinkers or great workers there are times of reaction; there is an inevitable "swinging of the pendulum" before the thinker or the worker settles down in his newer, wider sphere.

Wesley had been what we should call a Ritualist, but what was in those days called a Sacramentarian; but now, having received through the Moravians the greatest possible assistance in the attainment of his faith in Christ, he began to adopt their views, conform to their practices, and, apparently, somewhat blindly follow their extravagances.

Before Samuel Wesley left London for Tiverton his house in Dean's Yard had been a home for his brothers whenever they came to town. Afterwards Mr. Hutton, the father of their Oxford friend, and his family, who were much attached to them, occupied the house, and desired John and Charles Wesley to make the same use of it. John, therefore, was staying with the Huttons at the time of his conversion,[1] and a few days after, when Mr. Hutton had finished a sermon which he was reading on Sunday evening to his visitors and family, John rose, and, to their amazement, assured them that he

[1] The meaning of the word has been often perverted. Here we simply use it as expressing a new turn to his mind which brought him back to the faith of a child, "Except ye be converted," etc.

had never been a Christian till within the last five days, and then went on to say that he was perfectly certain of it, and that the only way for them to become Christians was to believe and confess that they were not so now.

"Have a care, Mr. Wesley," said Hutton, "how you despise the benefits received by the two sacraments!"

And when Wesley repeated the same thing at supper in Mrs. Hutton's presence, she exclaimed—

"If you were not a Christian ever since I knew you, you were a great hypocrite, for you made us all believe you were one."

Wesley replied that when a man had renounced everything but faith, and then got into Christ, then and not till then had he any reason to believe he was a Christian.[1]

"If faith only was necessary to save us," asked Mr. Hutton, "why did our Saviour give us His divine sermon on the Mount?"

"That was the *letter that killeth*," said Wesley.

"Hold," said the other; "you seem not to know what you say: are our Lord's words the letter that killeth?"

But it would have been as easy, says Southey, to cure a fever by reasoning with the patient, as to have made Wesley at this time doubt the soundness of his new opinions.

Mrs. Hutton said to Samuel Wesley, in writing an account of all this, that her two children had so high an opinion of Wesley's sanctity and judgment that she was afraid they would be drawn into his wild notions, and mentioned that Wesley had "abridged the life of one Halyburton, a Presbyterian teacher in Scotland," and that her son had meant to print it, but she and her husband had forbidden him to promote such "rank fanaticism," and that all his converts were "directed to get an assurance of their sins being pardoned, and to expect it in an instant." She said, too, that she knew the two Wesleys were "men of great parts and learning,"

[1] *Vide* John's explanation on p. 159 of his idea of a Christian.

but thought they were now under a "strange delusion," and, finally, she entreated Samuel to stop "this wild-fire" if he could.

In reply to this communication Samuel wrote from Tiverton on June 17, 1738—"I am sufficiently sensible of yours and Mr. Hutton's kindness to my brothers, and shall always acknowledge it. Falling into enthusiasm is being lost with a witness; and, if you are troubled for two of your children, you may be sure I am so for two whom I may, in some sense, call *mine*. What Jack means by his not being a Christian till last month, I understand not. Had he never been in covenant with God? Then, as Mr. Hutton observed, baptism was nothing. Had he totally apostatised from it? I dare say not; and yet he must either be unbaptised, or an apostate, to make his words true.

"If renouncing everything but faith means rejecting all merit of our own good works, what Protestant does not do that? Even Bellarmine, on his death-bed, is said to have renounced all merits but those of Christ. But if this renouncing regards good works in any other sense, as being unnecessary, it is wretchedly wicked.

"I hope your son does not think it as plainly revealed that he shall print an enthusiastic book, as it is, that he should obey his father and mother. God deliver us from visions that shall make the law of God vain! I pleased myself with the expectation of seeing Jack; but now I am afraid of it. I know not where to direct to him, or where he is. I will write to Charles."

Later, Samuel seems to have found where John was, for he wrote to him, asking what he meant by being made a Christian, the astute elder brother imagining rightly that part of John's apparent inconsistency might arise from a confusion of terms. John's reply shows that, at all events, he had a meaning of his own for the term Christian.

"By a Christian," he says, "I mean one who so believes in Christ as that sin hath no more dominion over him; and, in

this obvious sense of the word I was not a Christian till the 24th of May last. Till then sin had dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but from that time to this it hath not. Such is the free gift of God in Christ. If you ask me by what means I am made free? I answer by faith; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day."

A little time before his conversion Wesley had written very severely to his old teacher, William Law, telling him that for two years he had been preaching after the model of Mr. Law's two practical treatises, and all who had heard had allowed that the law was great, wonderful, and holy, but when they tried to do so, they found they could not fulfil it, and that "by doing the works of the law should no flesh living be justified." He had then bidden them pray earnestly for grace, and use all those other means of obtaining it which God had appointed. Still he and his hearers were more and more convinced that by this law man could not live; and he might have groaned to death under this heavy yoke had not a good man to whom God had lately directed him answered his complaining at once, by saying, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. Strip thyself naked of thy own works and thy own righteousness, and flee to Him." "Now, sir," continued Wesley, "suffer me to ask, how will you answer it to our common Lord that you never gave me this advice? Why did I scarcely ever hear you name the name of Christ; never so as to ground anything upon faith in His blood? If you say you advised other things preparatory to this, what is this but laying a foundation below the foundation? Is not Christ then the First as well as the Last? If you say you advised them, because you knew that I had faith already, verily you knew nothing of me; you discerned not my spirit at all. . . I know that I had not faith, unless the faith of a devil, the faith of Judas, that speculative, notional, airy shadow which lives in the head, not in the heart. But what is this to the living, justifying faith, the faith that

cleanses from sin? I beseech you, sir, by the mercies of God, to consider deeply and impartially whether the true reason of your never pressing this upon me was not this, that you had it not yourself." He then warned him, on the authority of Peter Böhler, whom he called a man of God, that his state was a very dangerous one, and asked him whether his extreme roughness and morose and sour behaviour could possibly be the fruit of a living faith in God.

To this extraordinary letter, as Southey calls it, Law returned a temperate answer. "As you have written," said he, "in obedience to a divine call, and in conjunction with another extraordinary good young man whom you know to have the Spirit of God, so I assure you, that considering your letter in that view, I neither desire nor dare to make the smallest defence of myself. I have not the least inclination to question your mission, nor the smallest repugnance to own, receive, reverence, and submit myself to you both in the exalted character to which you lay claim. But upon supposition that you had here only acted by that ordinary light, which is common to good and sober minds, I should remark upon your letter as follows:—How you may have been two years preaching the doctrine of the two Practical Discourses, or how you may have tired yourself and your hearers to no purpose is what I cannot say much to. A holy man, you say, taught you thus—*Believe and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus with all thy heart, and nothing shall be impossible to thee. Strip thyself naked of thy own works and thy own righteousness, and flee to Him.* I am to suppose that until you met with this holy man you had not been taught this doctrine. Did you not above two years ago give a new translation of Thomas à Kempis? Will you call Thomas to account, and to answer it to God, as you do me, for not teaching you that doctrine? Or will you say that you took upon you to restore the true sense of that divine writer, and to instruct others how they might best profit by reading him, before you had so much

as a literal knowledge of the most plain, open, and repeated doctrine in his book? You cannot but remember what value I always expressed for Kempis, and how much I recommended it to your meditations. You have had a great many conversations with me, and I dare say that you never were with me for half-an-hour without my being large upon that very doctrine which you make me totally silent and ignorant of. How far I have discerned your spirit or the spirit of others that have conversed with me, may perhaps be more a secret to you than you imagine. But granting you to be right in the account of your own faith, how am I chargeable with it?

"I am to suppose that after you had been meditating upon an author that, of all others, leads us the most directly to a real, living faith in Jesus Christ; after you had judged yourself such a master of his sentiments and doctrines as to be able to publish them to the world, with directions and instructions concerning such experimental divinity; that years after you had done this you had only the faith of a devil or Judas, an empty notion only in your head; that you were in such a state through ignorance that there was any better to be sought after; and that you were in this ignorance because I never directed or called you to this true faith. But, sir, as Kempis and I have both of us had your acquaintance and conversation, so pray let the fault be divided betwixt us; and I shall be content to have it said that I left you in as much ignorance of this faith as he did, or that you learnt no more of it by conversing with me than with him. If you had only this faith till some weeks ago, let me advise you not to be too hasty in believing that because you have changed your language or expressions, you have changed your faith. The head can as easily amuse itself with a *living and justifying faith in the blood of Jesus*, as with any other notion; and the heart which you suppose to be a place of security, as being the seat of self-love, is more deceitful than the head." He then refers to Wesley's uncourteous remark about his behaviour, saying mildly,

"Your last paragraph, concerning my sour, rough behaviour, I leave in full force; whatever you can say of me of that kind, without hurting yourself, will be always well received by me."

Wesley's answer to this letter is curious—it is hard, logical, intense, and, whilst regardless of self, is equally regardless of any other individual. Wesley allows the facts of Law's letter, but disputes the inferences he would draw from them. In reference to Kempis, he said it was Law's business to have led him to a truer understanding of his meaning. He repeats that Law's advice had kept him from the true faith.

"It would have been better," says Wedgewood, "if Law had let the correspondence drop here, but a second, and, if we may trust a rough dráft found among Law's papers, a third letter followed, carrying the discussion to the yet more useless stage of mere personal controversy."

"But if I tell you," writes Law, "that you had conceived a dislike to me, and wanted to let me know that a man of God had shown you the poverty and misery of my state; if I tell you that this was the main intent of your letter, you know that I tell you the truth."

Then he adds bitterly of Böhler (Wesley having brought about a meeting between the two), "I listened to him humbly, consented to his instructing me. We parted, to all appearance friendly. He passes a sentence of condemnation on me as being in a poor, miserable state, which lay open to his eyes. This *man of God* told nothing of this to myself, but goes away to another man of God, and invents and tells things as false as if he had charged me with picking his pocket. This other man of God confirms this sentence, as spoken by one who knew that he had the spirit of God."

The letter concludes with a question, which Wedgewood thinks may have given the finishing blow to Wesley's earliest form of High Churchism:—

"If you have a right to charge me with guilt for the neglect of the question you say it was my duty to have put to you,

may you not much more reasonably charge them who are authoritatively charged with you? Did the Church in which you were educated put this question to you? Did the Bishop that ordained you either Deacon or Priest do this for you? Did the Bishop that sent you a missionary into Georgia do this for you? Pray, sir, be at peace with me."

The correspondence ceased, and so did the friendship between Wesley and his first spiritual guide.

Southey says, "Many years afterwards Wesley printed, and in so doing sanctioned, an observation of one of his correspondents, which explains the difference that now appeared to him so frightful between his own doctrine and that of William Law. 'Perhaps,' said this writer, 'what the best heathens call Reason, and Solomon Wisdom, St. Paul Grace in general, and St. John Righteousness or Love, Luther Faith, and Fénelon Virtue, may be only different expressions for one and the self-same blessing, the light of Christ shining in different degrees upon different dispensations. Why then so many words, and so little charity exercised among Christians, about the particular term of a blessing experienced more or less by all righteous men!' There are sufficient indications that in the latter part of his life Wesley reposed in this feeling of Catholic charity, to which his heart always inclined him."

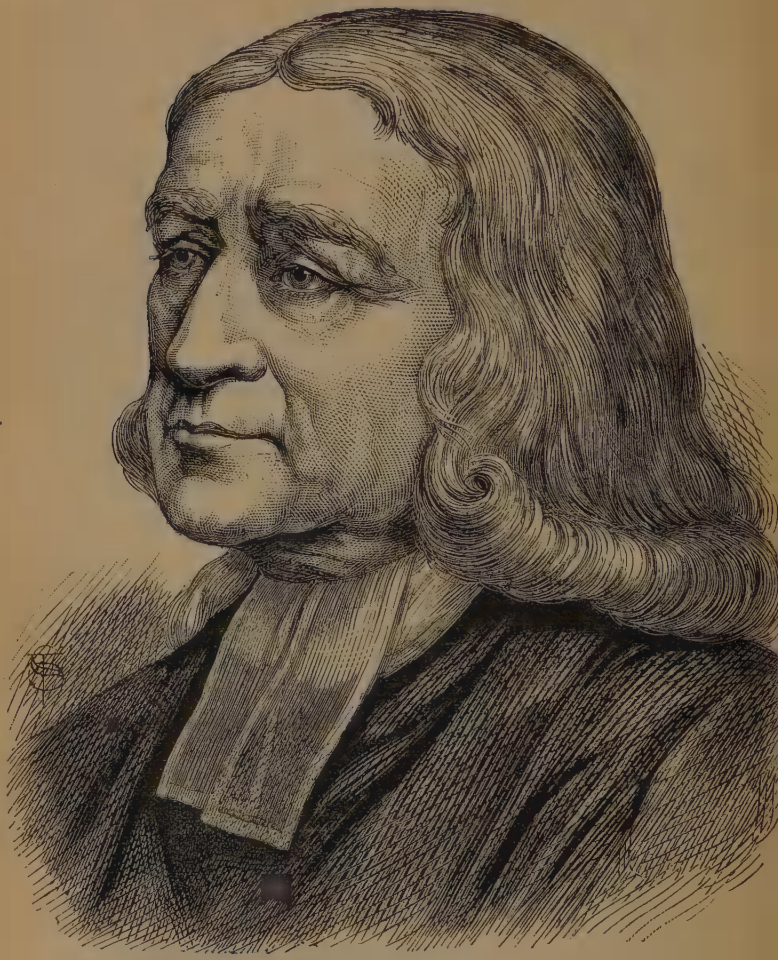
CHAPTER XVIII.

WESLEY IN GERMANY.

AFTER his conversion John Wesley continued about a fortnight "in heaviness, because of manifold temptations,—in peace, but not in joy." A certain letter which reached him perplexed him, because it maintained that "no doubting could co-exist with the least degree of true faith; that whoever at any time felt any doubt or fear was not weak in faith, but had no faith at all; and that none had any faith till the law of the spirit of life had made him free from the law of sin and death." Praying to God to direct him, he opened his Bible,[1] and his eye fell on that passage where St. Paul speaks of babes in Christ, who were not able to bear strong meat, yet to whom he said, "Ye are God's building; ye are the temple of God." Surely then, thought Wesley, these men had some degree of faith, though it is plain their faith was but weak. His mind, however, was still unsettled, so he determined to go and visit the Moravians at Herrnhuth, their chief settlement, in the hope that "conversing with these holy men, who were themselves living witnesses of the full power of faith, and yet able to bear with those that are weak, would be a means of so establishing his own soul, that he might go on from faith to faith, and from strength to strength."

Accordingly, on the 13th of June, having taken leave of his mother, Wesley set off for Herrnhuth. One of his companions

[1] This was a very common habit with the Wesleys and the early Methodists. When they were in a difficulty they prayed, then opened the Bible and took the first verse on which their eyes rested as a message for them.



REV. JOHN WESLEY.

was his friend Ingham, another was John Toltschig, one of the first fugitives who fled to Herrnhuth from the fierce persecution in Moravia in 1724.

Wesley records in his Journal that they arrived at Rotterdam on Thursday [the 15th of July]. He says:—

"We were eight in all, five English and three Germans. Dr. Koker, a physician of Rotterdam, was so kind when we set forward in the afternoon as to walk an hour with us on our way. I never before saw such a road as this. For many miles together it is raised for some yards above the level, and paved with a small sort of brick, as smooth and clean as the Mall in St. James's. The walnut-trees stand in even rows on either side; so that no walk in a gentleman's garden is pleasanter. About seven we came to Gondart, where we were a little surprised at meeting with a treatment which is not heard of in England. Several inns utterly refused to entertain us; so that it was with difficulty we at last found one where they did us the favour to take our money for some meat and drink and the use of two or three bad beds. They pressed us much in the morning to see their church, but were displeased at our pulling off our hats when we went in; telling us, 'We must not do so; it was not the custom there.' It is a large old building of the Gothic kind, resembling some of our English cathedrals. There was much history painting in the windows, which, they told us, is greatly admired."

In a little more than six hours they reached Ysselstein, the home of Baron Watteville, who had been one of Count Zinzendorf's fellow-students, and one of the young gentlemen at the Academy in Halle, who, about the year 1717, had formed an association called "The Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed," the object of which was the conversion of the Jews and heathen.

Watteville was now at the head of "a few German brethren and sisters, and about eight English Moravians, who were living in three or four small houses, until one should be built

large enough to contain them all." Wesley and his friends spent a day with them—it happened to be their Intercession Day.

"In the morning," writes Wesley, "some of our English brethren desired me to administer the Lord's Supper. The rest of the day we spent with all the brethren and sisters, in hearing the wonderful work which God is beginning to work over all the earth, and in making our requests known unto Him, and giving Him thanks for the mightiness of His kingdom."

At Amsterdam, where they spent four days, they attended several society meetings, where "the expounding was in High Dutch."

On Sunday, June 26th, they reached Cologne, which Wesley said was "the ugliest, dirtiest city I ever saw with my eyes."

They went to the Cathedral, which magnificent though unfinished building he called "mere heaps upon heaps, a huge misshapen thing, without either symmetry or neatness belonging to it." The worship here and in other Roman Catholic buildings, Wesley remarked, was not united worship. For one man prayed at one shrine, and one at another; and there was no "common" prayer. As they came out of the Cathedral, one of Wesley's companions scrupled to take off his hat as a Popish procession passed, upon which a Papist cried, "Knock down the Lutheran dog!" The friends, however, escaped any violence by retreating into the Cathedral.

When they embarked on the majestic Rhine Wesley says he "could not but observe the decency of the Papists above us who are called Reformed. As soon as ever we were seated (and so every morning after) they all pulled off their hats, and each used by himself a short prayer for our prosperous journey. And this justice I must do the boatmen (who upon the Rhine are generally wicked even to a proverb)—I never heard one of them take the name of God in vain, or saw any one laugh when anything of religion was mentioned."

Wesley of course admired the scenery of the Rhine immensely; the boat in which he travelled was drawn by horses, and he had ample time to study the beauties of one of the finest rivers in the world during the four days and nights which passed before they reached Mayence. On arriving, "faint and weary," at Frankfort, they were refused admittance because they had no passports. By the interposition, however, of Peter Böhler's father, who resided in the city, they were allowed to enter at last, and were hospitably entertained by Herr Böhler.

On Tuesday, the 4th of July, they came to Marienburg, in the neighbourhood of which Zinzendorf, two years before, had taken up his abode in an old ruinous castle called Ronneburg, and where he had established schools for poor children, whom he fed and clothed at his own expense. Here too he had formed a missionary congregation, consisting of forty students from Jena, most of whom became ministers in Europe, or went on missions to the heathen.

The meeting between Wesley and Count Zinzendorf was a deeply interesting one. Wesley, not being able to converse easily in German, talked to the Count in Latin. The latter had been through very similar experiences to those of Wesley; like him, but at a much earlier age—while a schoolboy of fifteen at Halle—he had been the centre of a little religious brotherhood. "He at Wittenberg, like Wesley at Oxford, had been 'mocked for his singularity'; and later in life had been the subject of so much obloquy, that King Frederick William, the father of Frederick the Great, after a long interview with him, had declared that 'all the devils in hell could not have invented greater lies than had been told him of Zinzendorf.' Finally, he (Zinzendorf) too formed the centre of an order, and struggled against the imputation of being the founder of a sect; and the connection in his case, as in Wesley's, was not of his own seeking. Except in this particular, however, the causes which connected Zinzendorf with the Moravians were

wholly unlike those which connected Wesley with the Methodists. He had postponed his strong desire of entering the ministry in deference to his mother's wish that he should occupy some position more suitable to his rank, and accepted a position at the Saxon Court. This sacrifice enabled him, as a person of influence, effectually to befriend the Moravian Protestants, driven by persecution from their native land; they owed their second organisation to his care, and are sometimes supposed to have been a sect founded by him."[1]

The Moravian family at Marienburg altogether consisted of about ninety people, all living in a large house rented by Zinzendorf. Wesley stayed with them a fortnight, conversing with the brethren, listening to the Count's sermons, and attending conferences and intercession meetings.

In a letter to his brother Samuel he says:—"God has given me at length the desire of my heart. I am with a Church whose conversation is in Heaven; in whom is the mind that was in Christ, and who so walk as He walked. As they have all one Lord and one faith, so they are all partakers of one Spirit—the Spirit of meekness and love, which uniformly and continually animates all their conversation. I believe in a week Mr. Ingham and I shall set out for Herrnhuth, about three hundred and fifty miles hence. Oh! pray for us, that God would sanctify to us all those precious opportunities."

In his Journal Wesley says:—"Here I continually met with what I sought for—viz., living proofs of the power of faith, persons saved from inward as well as outward sin, by 'the love of God shed abroad in their hearts;' and from all doubt and fear, by the abiding witness of 'the Holy Ghost given unto them.'"

That Zinzendorf was, though pious, a very peculiar man, the following anecdote, related by Hampson, shows:—The Count, who regarded Wesley as his pupil, ordered him one day to dig in the garden; and after Wesley had been there for some

[1] J. Wedgewood.

time working without coat, and when the unaccustomed labour had made him very tired, the lordly Count commanded him to enter a carriage that was waiting, and go with him to pay a visit to a neighbouring noble. Wesley of course wanted to wash his hands and put on his coat, but this his preceptor would not allow.

"You must be simple, my brother," he said, in answer to every remonstrance, and Wesley *was* so simple as to obey.

At the end of the fortnight Wesley again started for Herrnhuth, and at Weimar was brought before the Duke, who asked why he was going to Herrnhuth.

"To see the place where the Christians live," replied Wesley, upon which the Duke looked surprised, but allowed him to go.

At Halle and Dresden, Wesley and his friends were sent from one official to another for so long, before they were allowed to settle at an inn, that Wesley "greatly wondered that common sense and common humanity allowed such a senseless, inhuman usage of strangers."

Wesley arrived at Herrnhuth on August 1st, and found the Moravian settlement consisted of about a hundred houses, built on a rising ground. There was a chapel which contained six or seven hundred people; and, during the fortnight of his stay, he heard Christian David preach four times. Christian David, or the Bush preacher, as his persecutors called him, was a remarkable man; his boyhood had been spent in tending sheep, his youth and early manhood partly at the carpenter's bench, and partly in the soldier's tent. At that time he was a zealous Papist, and crawled on his knees before images, performed penances, etc., etc. He was twenty before he saw a Bible, and after that he hardly read anything else; the Bible convinced him of the errors of Popery, and he made up his mind to join the Lutherans. He began to preach at the age of twenty-seven, and his sermons were the means of converting numbers of his countrymen. Persecution followed; the converts fled; Herrnhuth was founded. Christian David

continued preaching in Moravia till the whole country was thrown into a state of excitement. "The people assembled at each other's houses to sing hymns, and to read the Bible. Shepherds chanted the praises of their Redeemer as they kept their flocks; servants at their work talked of nothing but His great salvation; and children on village greens poured out their fervent prayers before Him. Many were imprisoned; others were thrust into cellars, and made to stand in water till they were well-nigh frozen; not a few were loaded with irons, and obliged to work as convicts; and a whole host were condemned to pay heavy fines."[1]

All this sprung from the preaching of the unlettered man whom Wesley heard at Herrnhuth,—the man who five years before conducted the first missionaries to Greenland, and preached to the King of Denmark as he went,—a man who, when at home at Herrnhuth and not engaged in work for the Church, always followed his trade as a carpenter, and was respected and loved by young and old,—a man who often made mistakes, but was always ready to own his errors when they were pointed out to him,—a pious man, who lived in closest communion with the Saviour for whom he worked, and who never tired of preaching the precious truths his Bible taught him as long as he had strength to do so.

What a sight it must have been to see one of the most distinguished Fellows of Lincoln College, Oxford, sitting in the Herrnhuth Chapel and in the carpenter's cottage to be taught by such a man as that! And yet Christian David was immeasurably superior to the Oxford student in the science of saving truth—and Wesley's humility in sitting at his feet was not misplaced.

Wesley tells us that every time he heard David preach he chose the very subject which he would have desired if he had spoken to him before. "Thrice he described the state of those who are weak in faith; who are justified, but have not yet a

[1] Tyerman.

new, clean heart; who have received forgiveness through the blood of Christ, but have not received the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This state he explained from 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven;' when he showed at large, from various Scriptures, that many are children of God and heirs of the promises long before their hearts are softened by holy mourning; before they are 'comforted' by the abiding witness of the Spirit melting their hearts into all gentleness and meekness; and much more, before they are renewed in all that 'righteousness' which they hungered and thirsted after; before they are pure in heart from all self-will and sin, and merciful as their Father in Heaven is merciful."

The preacher told Wesley privately that he had "the forgiveness of sins, and a measure of the peace of God for many years before he had that witness of the Spirit which shut out all doubt and fear."

Again Wesley wrote in his Journal an extract from the fourth sermon, which he said made a great impression on his mind:—

"Here is a mystery. Here the wise men of the world are lost, are taken in their own craftiness. This the learned of the world cannot comprehend. It is foolishness unto them. Sin is the only thing which divides men from God. Sin [let him that heareth understand] is the only thing that unites them to God,—that is, the only thing which moves the Lamb of God to have compassion upon and by His blood to give them access to the Father. This then do, if you will lay a right foundation. Go straight to God with all your ungodliness. Tell Him, 'Thou whose eyes are a flame of fire scorching the heart, seest that I am ungodly. I plead nothing else; I do not say I am contrite, but I am ungodly. Therefore bring me to Him that justifieth the ungodly. Let Thy blood be the propitiation for me. For there is nothing in me but ungodliness.'"

This extract, says one of Wesley's biographers,[1] is valuable both as explaining the influence of the Moravians and Wesley's subsequent misunderstanding of and recoil from their doctrine. He felt now, with all the vividness of a sudden discovery which startles the mind by its simplicity, that the sense of need was all that was necessary for the soul to bring to God; and any utterance of this truth, even one that implied that a virtuous life was a disadvantage in the eyes of God, came home to him with the utmost power. This idea, however, took such a very different "proportion" in his mind after his separation from the Moravians, that it seemed to them he had ceased to think thus.

Other members of the simple community related their experiences to Wesley, and he was so much impressed with the reality of their religion that he wrote:—"I would gladly have spent my life here. Oh, when shall this Christianity cover the earth as the waters cover the sea?"

He was affected by their simple burial rites.[2] Their graveyard was "God's Acre." They bore thither the dead with hymns. Little children led the procession and carried the bier of a deceased child. He saw a bereaved father, a humble mechanic, looking upon the grave of his infant, and wishing to console him, found it unnecessary, for he had a higher Comforter. Wesley inquired about his affliction.

"Praised be the Lord," was the parent's reply; "praised be the Lord, He has taken the soul of my child to Himself; I know that when his body is raised again, both he and I shall be ever with the Lord."

These Moravians were divided into about ninety bands, each band meeting twice or three times a week to "confess their faults one to another, and to pray for one another that they might be healed." The rulers of the Church had daily conferences, and once a week there was one for strangers, to which any one might come and ask questions. The children and

[1] J. Wedgewood. [2] Abel Stevens.

young people were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, English, history, and geography.

The separation of the sexes was carried so far that only one or two of the male officers ever spoke with the women; female teachers, helpers, censors, etc., replacing them with those of their own sex.

Marriage, they said, was held by them in great reverence, "as highly conducive to the kingdom of Christ. But," they went on to say, "neither our young men nor women enter into it till they assuredly know they are married to Christ. When any know it is the will of God that they should change their state, both the man and woman are placed for a time with some married people, who instruct them how to behave, so that their married life may be pleasing to God. Then their design is laid before the whole Church, and after about fourteen days they are solemnly joined, though not otherwise habited than they are at other times."

On Sunday, the services began at six in the morning, and at eight in the evening they held their last service, after which the young men went round the town singing songs of praise. Casting lots was used both in public and in private, to decide matters of importance, when the reasons on each side appear to have been about equal in weight.

Some things there were in the customs of these Moravians of which, in spite of their wondrous faith and love, Wesley must necessarily have disapproved. For instance, some of their hymns were the veriest balderdash, and totally unfit for the service of the Almighty; and we find that after Wesley had left them and returned to England, he wrote to the Moravian Brethren part of a letter, which showed his uneasiness about other matters, but which apparently was, for some reason, never sent. We give it as it is:—

"My dear Brethren,—I cannot but rejoice in your steadfast faith, in your love to our Blessed Redeemer, your deadness to the world, your meekness, temperance, chastity, and love of

one another. I greatly approve of your conferences and bands; of your method of instructing children; and, in general, of your great care of the souls committed to your charge.

"But of some other things I stand in doubt, which I will mention in all love and meekness.

"Is not the Count all in all among you?

"Do you not magnify your own Church too much?

"Do you not use guile and dissimulation in many cases?

"Are you not of a close, dark, reserved temper and behaviour?"

These are grave accusations, and probably Wesley considered that it would be better not to send them. But he wrote to Zinzendorf, thanking him warmly for his hospitality, and telling him how reluctantly he had quitted the society of "the Christians who love one another," and then adding frankly, "I hope to see them at least once more, were it only to give them the fruit of my love by speaking freely on a few things which I did not approve, perhaps because I did not understand them." We may gather what some of the few things were by his concluding words, in which he desires that God would make Zinzendorf to abound more and more in all lowliness, faith, and love, *particularly towards those who are without*.[1]

The charge here implied was repeated by Wesley in after years.

[1] Wedgewood.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

DURING Wesley's absence in Germany, his brother Charles had kept up the impression their religious earnestness had made in London, and John found upon his return, on September 16th, that the society in Fetter Lane consisted of thirty-two persons. His presence, however, was required; "For, though," he writes, "a great door had been opened, the adversaries had laid so many stumbling-blocks before it, that the weak were daily turned out of the way. Numberless misunderstandings had arisen, by means of which the way of truth was much blasphemed; and thence had sprung anger, clamour, bitterness, evil-speaking, envyings, strifes, railings, evil surmises, whereby the enemy had gained such an advantage over the little flock, that of the rest durst no man join himself to them."

A few weeks after his return, however, Wesley had eight bands of men and two of women under his spiritual direction. He wrote of them as follows to his German friends:—

"We are endeavouring here also, by the grace which is given us, to be followers of you, as ye are of Christ."

With his own spiritual state he was still very dissatisfied, and about this time he wrote—

"St. Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance. Now although, by the grace of God in Christ, I find a measure of some of these in myself—viz., of peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, temperance; yet others I find not: I cannot find in myself the love of God, or of Christ; hence my

deadness and wanderings in public prayer; hence it is that even in the Holy Communion I have rarely any more than a cold attention; hence, when I hear of the highest instance of God's love, my heart is still senseless and unaffected; yea, at this moment I feel no more love to Him than to one I had never heard of. Again, I have not that joy in the Holy Ghost, no settled, lasting joy; nor have I such a peace as excludes the possibility either of fear or doubt. When holy men have told me I had no faith, I have often doubted whether I had or no; and those doubts have made me very uneasy, till I was relieved by prayer and the Holy Scriptures. Yet, upon the whole, although I have not that joy in the Holy Ghost, nor that love of God shed abroad in my heart, nor the full assurance of faith, nor the (proper) witness of the Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God—much less am I, in the full and proper sense of the words, in Christ a new creature—I nevertheless trust I have a measure of faith, and am accepted in the Beloved: I trust the handwriting that was against me is blotted out, and that I am reconciled to God through His Son."

Southey says this representation of his own state is evidently faithful; but his Moravian friends did not judge of it so favourably. Delamotte said to him:—

"You are better than you were at Savannah. You know that you were then quite wrong; but you are not right yet. You know that you were then blind; but you do not see now. I doubt not but God will bring you to the right foundation; but I have no hope for you while you are on the present foundation; it is as different from the true as the right hand from the left. You have all to begin anew. I have observed all your words and actions, and I see you are of the same spirit still; you have a simplicity, but it is a simplicity of your own; it is not the simplicity of Christ. You think you do not trust in your own works; but you do trust in your own works. You do not believe in Christ; . . . you have a peace, but it is not a true peace; if death were to approach, you would find

all your fears return. But I am forbid to say any more; my heart sinks in me like a stone."

Wesley was troubled by this solemnly delivered censure. He prayed to God, and then opened his Bible in his usual manner when seeking counsel. The words he opened at were—

"*As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy upon the Israel of God.*"

A second trial gave him the text, "*My hour is not yet come.*"

Meanwhile, Wesley was working hard, preaching, teaching, and hearing the heart-broken confessions of numbers of penitents. Both he and his brother preached in the churches whenever they were allowed to do so, but the congregations were often offended because of the crowds that followed them and that filled the buildings, and the clergy disliked and distrusted their doctrine.

Some time before, Charles Wesley had received a letter from his friend Gambold, which contains his view of this.

After saying he had seen by the fact "how intolerable the doctrine of faith is to the mind of man," and "how peculiarly intolerable to the most religious men," he goes on to say, "One may say the most unchristian things, even down to deism; the most enthusiastic things, so they proceed but upon mental raptures, lights, and unions; the most severe things, even the whole rigour of ascetic mortification; and all this will be forgiven. But if you speak of faith in such a manner as makes Christ a Saviour to the utmost, a most universal help and refuge; in such a manner as takes away glorying, but adds happiness to wretched man; as discovers a greater pollution in the best of us than we could ever before acknowledge, but brings a greater deliverance from it than we could before expect; if any offer to talk at this rate, he shall be heard with the same abhorrence as if he was going to rob mankind of their salvation, their Mediator, or their highest happiness. I am persuaded that a Montanist, or a Novatian, who from the height of his purity shall look with contempt upon poor

sinners, and exclude them from all mercy, would not be thought such an overthrower of the Gospel as he who should learn from the Author of it to be a friend to publicans and sinners, and to sit down upon the level of them as soon as they begin to repent."

Then, after speaking about self-righteousness, he goes on to say—"But the doctrine of faith is a downright robber, it takes away all this wealth. . . . But where am I running?" he adds. "My design was only to give you warning that, wherever you go, this *foolishness* of preaching will alienate hearts from you and open mouths against you."

"Though my brother and I are not permitted to preach in most of the churches in London," wrote Wesley to the Moravians at Herrnhuth, "yet, thanks be to God, there are others left wherein we have liberty to speak the truth as it is in Jesus. Likewise every evening, and on set evenings in the week, at two several places we publish the word of reconciliation, sometimes to twenty or thirty, sometimes to fifty or sixty, sometimes to three or four hundred persons met together to hear it."

And to Dr. Koker he wrote:—"His blessed Spirit has wrought so powerfully, both in London and Oxford, that there is a general awakening, and multitudes crying out, 'What must we do to be saved?'"

Driven out of many churches, the Wesleys went to the prisons and hospitals, and wherever they went and preached and expounded the Word of God, souls seem to have been awakened, and many turned to the Lord.

On November 3rd [1738], Wesley records in his Journal:—

"I preached at St. Antholin's; Sunday, 5th, in the morning at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, in the afternoon at Islington, and in the evening to such a congregation as I never saw before, at St. Clement's, in the Strand: as this was the first time of my preaching here, I suppose it is to be the last.

"On Wednesday my brother and I went, at their earnest

desire, to do the last good office to the condemned malefactors. It was the most glorious instance I ever saw of faith triumphing over sin and death. One, observing the tears run fast down the cheeks of one of them in particular, while his eyes were steadily fixed upwards, a few moments before he died, asked, 'How do you feel your heart now?'

"He calmly replied, 'I feel a peace which I could not believe to be possible; and I know it is the peace of God which passeth all understanding.'"

Charles Wesley used the occasion to preach the Gospel to a large gathering of publicans and sinners. "Oh! Lord God of my fathers," exclaims Wesley, "accept even me among them, and cast me not out from among Thy children."

The next Friday, Wesley left town for Oxford, and spent Saturday evening with "a little company" at Oxford. He was grieved to find that prudence had made them leave off singing psalms, and was afraid it would not stop there. "God deliver me," he wrote, "and all that seek Him in sincerity, from what the world calls Christian prudence."

The Wesleys were both of them still tenacious of "Church order"; they had done nothing, nor did they intend to do anything, which was contrary to that order. But it became necessary that they should give explanations to Dr. Gibson, the Bishop of London. The latter, we are told, was "of a mild and conciliatory temper, a distinguished antiquary, a sound scholar, equally frugal and beneficent, perfectly tolerant as becomes a Christian, and conscientiously attached as becomes a bishop to the doctrines and discipline of the Church."[1]

When John and Charles Wesley waited upon him "to justify their conduct," he said to them, in reference to that tenet which now notoriously characterised their preaching, "If by assurance you mean an inward persuasion, whereby a man is conscious in himself, after examining his life by the law of God and weighing his own sincerity, that he is in a state of

[1] Abel Stevens.

salvation and acceptable to God, I do not see how any good Christian can be without such an assurance."

The brothers answered that they contended for this, and complained that they had been charged with Antinomianism, because they preached justification by faith alone.

They spoke also about the propriety of re-baptising Dissenters, Wesley saying that if any person dissatisfied with lay-baptism should desire episcopal, he should consider it his duty to administer it. The Bishop said he was against it himself. The brothers asked advice and information as to the law ecclesiastical.[1] Was a simple religious meeting a "conventicle"? The Bishop advised them to read and investigate such matters for themselves; and promised to listen to no "hasty or prejudiced stories" in their disfavour. He concluded the interview by telling them they might come to him at any time.

A few weeks after Charles availed himself of this permission, and informed the Bishop that a woman wanted him to re-baptise her, as she was not satisfied with her baptism by a Dissenter.

The Bishop replied that he wholly disapproved of it; Charles Wesley rejoined that he did not expect his approbation, but only came in obedience to give him notice of his intention.

"It is irregular," said the Bishop. "I never receive any such intention but from the minister."

"My lord," answered Wesley, "the Rubric does not so much as require the minister to give you notice, but any discreet person; I have the minister's leave."

"Who gave you authority to baptise?"

"Your lordship," replied Charles—he had been ordained priest by him—"and I shall exercise it in any part of the known world."

"Are you a licensed curate?" said the Bishop, beginning to be offended at the way in which he spoke.

[1] *The Churchman's History of Wesley.*

Perceiving he could no longer appeal to the letter of the law, Charles Wesley replied he had the leave of the proper minister.

"But do you not know that no man can exercise parochial duty in London without my leave? It is only *sub silentio.*"

"But you know many do take that permission for authority, and you yourself allow it," expostulated Charles.

"It is one thing to convince," said the Bishop, "and another to approve: I have power to inhibit you."

"Does your lordship exact that power? Do you now inhibit me?"

"Oh, why will you push matters to the extreme!" exclaimed the irritated Bishop, closing the interview by saying, "Well, sir, you knew my judgment before, and you know it now."

Charles Wesley would not reflect with much satisfaction upon this dialogue when he and his brother altered their opinions respecting the point in dispute.[1]

Soon afterwards the brothers waited upon the Archbishop of Canterbury, also for the purpose of "justifying themselves."

"He showed us," said Charles, speaking of this interview, "great affection, and cautioned us to give no more umbrage than was necessary for our own defence, to forbear exceptional phrases, and to keep to the doctrines of the Church. We told him we expected persecution would abide by the Church till her articles and homilies were repealed. He assured us he knew of no design in the governors of the Church to innovate; neither should there be any innovation while he lived."

If the minds of the bishops were favourably inclined, and if many of the clergy wished well to the Methodist movement, why, asks Mr. Denny, were not the Wesleys kept within the system of the Church? And he answers the question by saying the reply to it is found in the history of the last century. "Convocation had died out; and the idea seems to have been lost of the Church as one grand corporate body, deliberating and acting together for the common good. Each prelate and

[1] Southey.

each parochial minister acted timorously, and on his own responsibility. There was no benefit of mutual consultation, and of concerted action. Only in our day have the 'sacred synods been revived, and the smaller assemblies for the diocese and the rural deanery convened.'"

In the latter part of the year Whitefield returned from Georgia, with two objects in view: the first that he might receive priest's orders, and the second that he might raise contributions for founding and supporting an orphan-house in the colony. During a residence of three months in America he had got on with the people much more happily than his predecessor, Wesley; for though he discharged his duties with equal zeal and faithfulness, he never attempted to revive obsolete forms, nor insisted upon what was unnecessary. He seems to have been really happy in Savannah, and would have contentedly remained there if it had not been expedient for him to return to England for a time at least.

As soon as he arrived in London he waited on the Bishop and Archbishop, and he was soon ordained priest by his venerable friend, the Bishop of Gloucester. "God be praised," he said, "I was praying night and day whilst on shipboard, if it might be the Divine will, that good Bishop Benson, who laid hands on me as a deacon, might now make me a priest; and now my prayer is answered."

The trustees highly approved of his conduct, and, at the request of the magistrates and settlers in Georgia, presented him with the living of Savannah. His business of collecting money for the orphan-house, however, detained him in England until he took those decisive steps which led step by step to the separation of the Methodists from the Church.[1]

Wesley hastened to London to meet Whitefield on his return, and mentions in his Journal that "God gave us once more to take sweet counsel together." The old affection and confidence between the two men seemed unbroken, and

[1] Southey.

when the Fetter Lane Society began the new year (1739) with a love-feast—a meal of bread and water eaten in company, with prayer, belonging to the Moravian discipline—the bread broken in common seemed a fit symbol of their oneness of hope and aim.[1]

"About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer," says Mr. Wesley, speaking of that meeting when there were about sixty others present, "the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'"

"It was a Pentecostal season indeed," says Whitefield, and adds, respecting those "Society meetings," that sometimes whole nights were spent in prayer.

Thus did the three friends begin the year which was to prove such a crisis in their lives and in their work.

[1] Wedgewood.

CHAPTER XX.

FIELD PREACHING.

On the 5th of January 1739, a conference, says Whitefield, was held at Islington with seven ministers, "despised Methodists," concerning many things of importance. They continued in fasting and prayer till three o'clock, and then parted "*with a full conviction that God was about to do great things among us.*"

Whitefield wished, as we have seen, to raise money for his projected orphan-house, but the churches were soon generally closed to his appeals; only two or three were left open to him for a short time longer.

One day, as he was preaching in one of these with "great freedom of heart and clearness of voice,"[1] while nearly a thousand people stood outside the building and hundreds had gone away for want of room, the thought struck him of proclaiming the Word, as Christ did, in the open air. He mentioned it to some friends, who thought it a fanatical idea. "However," he writes, "we knelt down and prayed that nothing may be done rashly. Hear and answer, O Lord, for Thy name's sake."

He went down to Bristol, which before had received him so enthusiastically. The churches were open to him on his arrival, but in the short time of a fortnight every church was closed to him, and there was only the prison left for him to preach in—soon the mayor closed that door also to him.

Not far from Bristol was Kingswood, which was formerly a royal chase, but its forests had mostly fallen, and it was now a

[1] Abel Stevens.

region of coal mines and inhabited by a wild and lawless people. There was no church there, and none nearer than the suburbs of Bristol, three or four miles distant. Whitefield thought surely in such a place, if anywhere, field preaching might be justifiable; so on Saturday, February 1739, he crossed the Rubicon, and did what so many Church of England clergymen do in these days when there is a need for it, but what seemed then a most irregular proceeding, preached in the open air, with only the vault of heaven above him for a roof, and the green sward below him for a floor. He stood upon a mount, in a place called Rose Green, his "first field pulpit," and preached to as many as came to hear—in number about two hundred—of the degraded and astonished colliers.

"I thought," said Whitefield, "it might be doing the service of my Creator, who had a mountain for His pulpit, and the heavens for a sounding-board; and who, when his Gospel was refused by the Jews, sent His servants into the highways and hedges."

The young preacher was fully aware of the importance of the step he had taken.

"Blessed be God," he said in his Journal, "that the ice is now broken, and I have now taken the field. Some may censure me; but is there not a cause? Pulpits are denied, and the poor colliers ready to perish for lack of knowledge."

When Whitefield arrived at Bristol, the Chancellor of that diocese informed him that he would not prohibit any clergyman from lending him a church; but in the course of the week he sent for him, and intimated that he was about to stop his proceedings.[1] He then asked him by what authority he preached in the diocese of Bristol without a licence?

"I thought that custom was grown obsolete," Whitefield replied; "and why, pray, sir, did not you ask the clergyman that question who preached for you last Thursday?"

1 Southey.

Whitefield records this reply without any sense of its impropriety or irrelevancy.

The Chancellor proceeded to read him those canons which forbade any minister from preaching in a private house.

Whitefield imagined they did not apply to professed clergymen of the Church of England.

When he was informed of his mistake, he said—

"There is also a canon, sir, forbidding all clergymen to frequent taverns and play at cards; why is that not put in execution?" He then went on to say that, notwithstanding those canons, he could not but speak the things which he knew, and that he was determined to proceed as usual. This answer was written down, and the Chancellor then said—

"I am resolved, sir, if you preach or expound anywhere in this diocese till you have a licence, I will first suspend, and then excommunicate you."

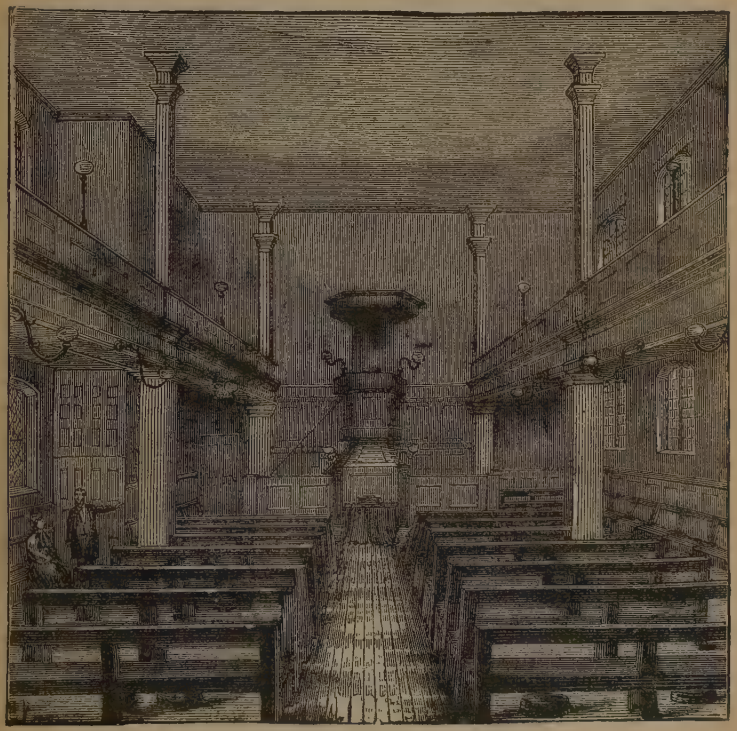
Whitefield wrote in his Journal after this interview: "To-day, my Master honoured me more than ever He did yet;" for he counted it all honour to suffer persecution.

He continued his labours at Kingswood, and the second time he preached his audience consisted of two thousand persons; his third congregation numbered from four to five thousand, and they went on increasing to ten, fourteen, twenty thousand.

"The sun shone very bright," he says on one occasion, "and the people standing in such an awful manner round the mount, in the profoundest silence, filled me with a holy admiration. Blessed be God for such a plentiful harvest! Lord, do Thou send forth more labourers into Thy harvest."

Another time he says: "The trees and hedges were full. All was hushed when I began: the sun shone bright, and God enabled me to preach for an hour with great power, and so loud, that all, I was told, could hear me. Blessed be God, Mr. —— spoke right: *the fire is kindled in the country!* To behold such crowds standing together in such an awful silence,

and to hear the echo of their singing run from one end of them to the other, was very solemn and striking." Yet presently, as he proceeded, there was a striking change in his audience, and he had "the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight



INTERIOR OF FETTER LANE CHAPEL.

of thousands and thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in the trees, all affected and drenched in tears together." This, with the solemnity of the approaching evening, at times almost overcame him.

He wrote for Wesley to come and join him, but Charles Wesley at first strongly opposed the suggestion. The matter was laid before the society in Fetter Lane, and as there was a great conflict of opinions about it, it was agreed that they should settle the matter by drawing lots. By that means it was decided that Wesley should go; but, as several desired it, the Bible also was consulted in their usual way. However, the verses which the eye first fell upon do not seem to us to have been exactly relevant. The last of the three was: "And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem."

Perhaps the little company of Methodists perceived a similarity between Bristol and Jerusalem and Ahaz and John Wesley which is not apparent to us, for Wesley records the text in his Journal without any remark about it. As he did not die, however, he seems to have supposed this and other texts were given as a trial of his faith. At any rate, Charles no longer opposed his going, and he accordingly set off to Bristol at the end of March, and met Whitefield there.

"I could scarcely reconcile myself," he says in his Journal, "at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church."

On the next Sunday he heard Whitefield preach, and then the latter made over to him his out-door congregations, and left for other fields. The multitude sobbed aloud when he said farewell to them, crowds gathered at his door when he departed, and twenty persons accompanied him out of the city on horseback. As he passed through Kingswood, the grateful colliers stopped him; they had prepared an "entertainment" for him, and offered subscriptions for a charity school to be established among them. He was astonished at their liberality, and when, at their request, he laid the corner-stone of the

building, he knelt down on the ground among them, and prayed that the gates of hell might not prevail against it—to which their rough voices responded a hearty "Amen." Leaving them at last, Whitefield went on into Wales.

Of his first work after Whitefield's departure, Wesley writes:—"April 1, 1739.—In the evening (Mr. Whitefield being gone), I began expounding our Lord's sermon on the mount (one pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching, though I suppose there were churches at that time also) to a little society which was accustomed to meet once or twice a week in Nicholas Street.

"Monday, 2nd.—At four in the afternoon, I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people. The Scripture on which I spoke was this (is it possible any one should be ignorant that it is fulfilled in every true minister of Christ?): 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'"

When Wesley was questioned as to his good faith in holding out-of-door services without the consent of the local clergymen, he replied:—

"You ask, 'How is it that I assemble Christians who are none of my charge, to sing psalms, and pray, and hear the Scriptures expounded, and think it hard to justify doing this in other men's parishes, upon Catholic principles?'

"Permit me to speak plainly. If by Catholic principles you mean any other than Scriptural, they weigh nothing with me. I allow no other rule, whether of faith or practice, than the Holy Scriptures; but on Scriptural principles I do not think it hard to justify whatever I do. God in Scripture commands me, according to my power, to instruct the ignorant, reform

the wicked, confirm the virtuous. Man forbids me to do this in another's parish; that is, in effect, to do it at all, seeing I have now no parish of my own, nor probably ever shall. Whom then shall I hear—God or man? If it be just to obey man rather than God, judge you. 'A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.' But where shall I preach it upon the principles you mention? Why not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America; not in any of the Christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth? For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, 'Go back then to the heathens from whence you came;' nay, but neither could I now (on your principles) preach to them, for all the heathens in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica.

"Suffer me now," he goes on to say, "to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty to declare unto all that are willing to hear the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to, and sure I am that His blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and as such am employed according to the plain directions of His word, 'As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men;' and His providence clearly concurs with His word, which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and 'go about doing good.'"

It must have required some amount of moral courage in a gentleman, well born and well educated as Wesley was, the distinguished Fellow too of an Oxford College, to mount upon a table, or on the stump of a tree, or climb into a cart, and then, attired in his gown and bands, preach to a multitude of unwashed, uncombed, uncultivated people, down whose swarthy faces tears marked little white channels, as they hung

upon his words. Anyhow, the sight seemed so wonderful that it attracted the notice of the "higher classes," and frequently amongst the crowd were to be seen their carriages. Wesley, we are told, spoke just as fearlessly to these nobility and gentry as to the poorer people, on which account he came to be considered by some as a rude, ill-mannered person.

During a visit to the neighbouring city of Bath,[1] which was at that time a centre of fashionable life, a notoriously bad character, called "Beau" Nash, who was the acknowledged leader in Bath society, attempted to stop Wesley's meetings. Shortly after the preacher had begun his sermon, the dandy appeared in gorgeous array, impudently demanding—

"By what authority dare you do what you are doing now?"

"By the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by him who is now Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid his hands upon my head and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the Gospel,'" answered Mr. Wesley deliberately.

"But this is a conventicle," said Nash, "and contrary to Act of Parliament."

"No," answered Wesley; "conventicles are seditious meetings, but here is no sedition; therefore it is not contrary to Act of Parliament."

"I say it is," stormed the fellow; "and, besides, your preaching frightens people out of their wits."

"Sir," said Wesley, "did you ever hear me preach?"

"No."

"How can you judge of what you never heard?"

"I judge by common report."

"Is not your name Nash?" asked Wesley.

"It is," said the "Beau."

"Well, sir, I dare not judge *you* by common report," was Mr. Wesley's stinging reply.

The pretentious fop was confounded, especially when an old woman in the congregation asked Wesley to allow her to

[1] Rev. W. H. Daniels.

answer him, which she did with such a manner that he slunk away, and the service was able to proceed.

Wesley had already undesignedly become an "itinerant." His Journal shows that he was constantly going from place to place preaching and "expounding." His plan was as follows:—

"An exposition to one or other of the British societies every night, and preaching every Sunday morning and every Monday and Saturday afternoon. At Kingswood, including Hannam Mount, Rose Green, and Two Mile Hill, he preached twice every Sunday, and also every alternate Tuesday and Friday. At Baptist Mills he preached every Friday; at Bath, once a fortnight, on Tuesday; and at Pensford, once a fortnight, on Thursday."

In regard to his doctrine, we may say his chief and almost only aim was to explain to the people the plan of Scriptural salvation; for, as may be seen, almost all his texts have an immediate bearing on this the greatest of all pulpit themes. Believing that he was himself in a state of salvation, his whole soul was bent upon expounding the truth which above all other truths is the means of saving sinners.

"The points," he writes, "I chiefly insisted upon were four. First, that orthodoxy or right opinions is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part at all; that neither does religion consist in negatives, in bare harmlessness of any kind; nor merely in externals in doing good, or using the means of grace, or of charity; that it is nothing short of, or different from, the mind that was in Christ; the image of God stamped upon the heart; inward righteousness, attended with the peace of God and joy in the Holy Ghost. Secondly, that the only way to this religion is repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, that by this faith, he that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, is justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ. And,

lastly, that being justified by faith, we taste of the Heaven to which we are going; we are holy and happy; we tread down sin and fear, and sit in Heavenly places with Christ Jesus."[1]

This most certainly was not doctrine which should have alarmed the clergy and caused them to close the doors of their churches against the preacher.

[1] *Wesley's Works.*

CHAPTER XXI.

STRANGE SCENES.

ALTHOUGH there was nothing in the doctrine which Wesley preached to justify the clergymen of that time in prohibiting him from their pulpits, we can easily understand that some of the violent demonstrations which took place whilst he was preaching were exceedingly disliked by all who wished the worship of Almighty God to proceed with decency and in order.

Hutton tells us that Wesley's congregations were composed of every description of persons, who, without the slightest attempt at order, cried "Hurrah!" with one breath, and with the next burst into tears, whilst some poked each other's ribs, and others shouted "Hallelujah!"

"It was a jumble of extremes of good and evil; and so distracted alike were both preacher and hearers, that it was enough to make one cry to God for His interference. Here thieves, prostitutes, fools, people of every class, several men of distinction, a few of the learned, merchants, and numbers of poor people who had never entered a place of worship, assembled in crowds and became godly."

Two or three times Wesley went to town for a short while, and his preaching both there and in the country was frequently interrupted by more or less violent scenes.

In his Journal he records, on the 25th of April, "While I was preaching at Newgate, on these words, 'He that believeth hath everlasting life,' I was insensibly led, without any previous design, to declare strongly and explicitly, that 'God willeth all men to be thus saved,' and to pray that, 'if this were not the

truth of God, He would not suffer the blind to go out of their way; but if it were He would bear witness to His word.' Immediately one, and another, and another sunk to the earth: they dropped on every side as thunderstruck. One of them cried aloud. We besought God in her behalf, and He turned her heaviness into joy. A second being in the same agony, we called upon God for her also, and He spoke peace unto her soul. In the evening I was again pressed in spirit to declare that 'Christ gave Himself a ransom for all.' And almost before we called upon Him to set to His seal, He answered. One was so wounded by the sword of the Spirit, that you would have imagined she could not live a moment. But immediately His abundant kindness was showed, and she loudly sang of His righteousness.

"Friday, 26th.—All Newgate rang with the cries of those whom the word of God cut to the heart; two of whom were in a moment filled with joy, to the astonishment of those that beheld them. . . .

"Monday, 29th.—We understood that many were offended at the cries of those on whom the power of God came; among whom was a physician, who was much afraid there might be fraud or imposture in the case. To-day one whom he had known many years was the first (while I was preaching at Newgate) who broke out into 'strong cries and tears.' He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, till great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God."

And the next day he records:—"May 1.—Many were offended again, and, indeed, much more than before; for at Baldwin Street my voice could scarce be heard amidst the groanings of some, and the cries of others, calling aloud to 'Him that is

mighty to save.' I desired all that were sincere of heart to beseech with me 'the Prince exalted for us, that He would proclaim deliverance to the captives.' And He soon showed that He heard our voice. Many of those who had been long in darkness saw the dawn of a great light; and ten persons (I afterwards found) then began to say in faith, 'My Lord and my God.'

"A Quaker, who stood by, was not a little displeased at the dissimulation of those creatures, and was biting his lips and knitting his brows, when he dropped down as thunderstruck. The agony he was in was even terrible to behold. We besought God not to lay folly to his charge; and he soon lifted up his heart, and cried aloud, 'Now I know thou art a prophet of the Lord.'"

Another step in these manifestations was reached when these terrible emotions seized upon people in their own homes. J—— H——, a zealous Churchman, one, too, who was against Dissenters of every denomination, being informed that people fell into strange fits at the "Societies," came to see and judge for himself. He then felt less satisfied than before, and so "went about to his acquaintance one after another," says Wesley, "and laboured above measure to convince them 'it was a delusion of the devil.' We were going home when one met us in the street and informed us 'that J—— H—— was fallen raving mad.' It seems he had sat down to dinner, but had a mind first to end a sermon he had borrowed on 'Salvation by Faith.' In reading the last page he changed colour, fell off his chair, and began screaming terribly and beating himself against the ground." His convulsions were frightful, the neighbours hurried in; and when Wesley too entered he was greeted with the exclamation, "This is he who I said was a deceiver of the people; but God has overtaken me. I said it was all a delusion; but this is no delusion." Wesley prayed with him, and by-and-by he was quiet, and "both his soul and body were set at liberty."

A woman, feeling this strange agitation coming upon her, ran out of the meeting that she might not be made a public spectacle, but so powerful was the mysterious influence to which she was a prey that she sank down in the street and had to be carried home, where Wesley found her in violent agony, which was removed while he prayed with her.

It is quite painful to read some of the cases reported by Wesley, but the wildest ravings never failed to give way to peace and calm whilst he was praying.

Perhaps the worst case was that of an illiterate girl at Kingswood, apparently taken ill at her own house.

"It was a terrible scene," says Wesley. "Anguish, horror, and despair above all description appeared in her pale face; the thousand distortions of her body showed how the dogs of hell were gnawing her heart. The shrieks intermixed were scarce to be endured, but her stony eyes could not weep. She screamed out, as soon as words could find their way, 'I am damned, damned, lost for ever! Six days ago you might have helped me, but it is past; I am the devil's now, I have given myself to him. I will be his, I will serve him, I will go with him to hell!' She then began praying to the devil. We began (singing)—

"'Arm of the Lord, awake, awake!'

She immediately sunk down as asleep, but as soon as we left off, broke out again with inexhaustible vehemence, 'Stony hearts, break! I am a warning to you. Break, break, poor stony hearts! I am damned that you may be saved; you need not be damned, though I must.' We interrupted her by calling upon God, on which she sank down as before, and another young woman began to roar out as she had done. We continued in prayer till past eleven, when God in a moment spoke peace unto the soul, first of the first tormented, and then of the other, and they both joined in singing praises to Him who had stilled the enemy and the avenger."

The scene no doubt was a very trying one, and, although the end was so triumphant, Wesley seemed unwilling to obey the next summons to another young woman, taken ill at the Society. However, he opened his Testament at the words, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth;" and then went to the girl, who was held down on the ground by three or four persons, her violent convulsions taxing their utmost efforts to hold her still. "She began screaming," he said, "before I came into the room, then broke out into a horrid laugh, mixed with blasphemy grievous to hear. My brother coming in, she called out, 'Preacher, field preacher, I don't love field preaching.'" This was repeated for two hours with expressions of strong aversion. Wesley visited the wretched girl twice that day, and the following noon he was again by her bedside. The crisis was now passed, "all her pangs ceased in a moment, and she was filled with peace, and knew that the son of wickedness had departed from her."

Charles Wesley was very much against the noisy, violent demonstrations of these penitents, and did his utmost to discourage them. He wrote—

"Many no doubt were at our first preaching struck down, both soul and body, into the depth of distress. Their outward affections were easy to be imitated. Many counterfeits I have already detected. The first night I preached here half my words were lost through their outcries. Last night, before I began, I gave public notice that whosoever cried so as to drown my voice, should be carried to the farthest corner of the room. But my porters had no employment the whole night; yet the Lord was with us, mightily convincing of sin and of righteousness. I am more and more convinced the fits were a device of Satan to stop the course of the Gospel."

Whitefield's more lively preaching was almost always unaccompanied by these "signs," and at first he much disapproved of them. On July 25th he wrote to Wesley—

"HONOURED SIR,—I cannot think it right in you to give so

much encouragement to those convulsions which people have been thrown into under your ministry. Was I to do so, how many would cry out every night? I think it is tempting God to require such signs. That there is something of God in it, I doubt not. But the devil I believe interposes. I think it will encourage the French Prophets, take people from the written word, and make them depend on visions, convulsions, etc., more than on the promises and precepts of the Gospel."

Twelve days after Whitefield was in Bristol, and Wesley wrote as follows :—

"July 7.—I had an opportunity to talk with Mr. Whitefield of those outward signs which had so often accompanied the work of God. I found his objections were chiefly grounded on gross misrepresentations of matters of fact. But next day he had an opportunity of informing himself better; for in the application of his sermon, four persons sunk down close to him almost in the same moment. One of them lay without either sense or motion; a second trembled exceedingly; the third had strong convulsions all over his body, but made no noise unless by groans; the fourth, equally convulsed, called upon God, with strong cries and tears. From this time, I trust, we shall all suffer God to carry on His own work in the way that pleaseth Him."

"This," says Tyerman, "was an important crisis. Without expressing any opinion respecting these 'signs,' as Wesley calls them, we cannot but admire Wesley's wish and hope that God may be allowed to work His own work in His own way. Of all men living, Wesley was one of the least likely to desire novelties like these; but he was wise enough and reverent enough not to interpose when God was working, and to say that unless His work was done in a certain fashion he should object to its being done at all. Some in modern times have been in danger of doing this."

Whitefield's objections were silenced. He writes on July 7: —"I had a useful conference about many things with my

honoured friend, Mr. John Wesley. I found that Bristol had great reason to bless God for his ministry. The congregations I observed to be much more serious and affected than when I left them; and their loud and repeated Amens, which they put up to every petition, as well as the exemplariness of their conversation in common life, plainly show that they have not received the grace of God in vain. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but how is it that ye cannot discern the signs of these times? That good, great good, is done is evident. What is it but little less than blasphemy against the Holy Ghost to impute this great work to delusion, and to the powers of the devil?"

We will notice a few more passages in Wesley's Journals.

"July 23.—On several evenings this week many were deeply convinced, but none were delivered from that painful conviction. I fear we have grieved the Spirit of the jealous God by questioning His work, and that therefore He is withdrawn from us for a season. But He will return and abundantly pardon.

"July 30.—Two more were in strong pain, both their souls and bodies being well-nigh torn asunder. But, though we cried unto God, there was no answer. One of them cried aloud, though not articulately, for twelve or fourteen hours, when her soul was set at liberty. She was a servant, and her master forbade her returning to his service, saying he would have none in his house who had received the Holy Ghost.

"August 5.—Six persons at the new room were deeply convinced of sin, three of whom were a little comforted by prayer.

"August 11.—In the evening two were seized with strong pangs, as were four the next evening, and the same number at Gloucester Lane on Monday, one of whom was greatly cut to the heart, but their wound was not as yet healed."

Many reasons have been suggested for these strange and mysterious facts; for a hundred and thirty years they have

been sneered at by Wesley's enemies, and have also puzzled Wesley's friends.

Isaac Taylor writes:—

"These disorders resembled, in some of their features, the demoniacal possessions mentioned in the Gospel history. The bodily agitations were perhaps as extreme in the one class of instances as in the other; nevertheless, there is no real analogy between the two. The demoniacs were *found* in this state by Christ where He went preaching; they did not *become such* while listening to Him. Besides, in no one instance recorded in the Gospels or Acts, did demoniacal possession, or any bodily agitations resembling it, come on as the initial stage of conversion. How then are we to dispose of such cases? Perhaps not at all to our satisfaction, except so far as this, that they serve to render so much the more unambiguous the distinction between themselves and those genuine affections which the apostolic writers describe and exemplify."

Another able writer says:—"We must remember too what kind of people they were who were thus affected. The lower middle class of Hanoverian England were turbulent beyond the sense in which uncultivated people are always turbulent. The same instincts which found gratification in cruel amusements, and in intoxication, would also derive a certain satisfaction from the horrible ravings which Wesley has copied into his Journal. . . . Any one who studies the account with the same attention he would give to that of any other strange event, will be convinced that there was something in the personal influence of Wesley (for it certainly does not remain in his sermons) which had the power of impressing on a dull and lethargic world such a sense of the horror of evil, its mysterious closeness to the human soul, and the need of a miracle for the separation of the two, as no one, perhaps, could suddenly receive without some violent physical effect."[1]

[1] J. Wedgewood.

The Rev. R. Watson writes:—

"That cases of real enthusiasm occurred at this and subsequent periods is indeed allowed. There are always nervous, dreamy, and excitable people to be found; and the emotion produced among these would often be communicated by natural sympathy. No one could be blamed for this, unless he had encouraged the excitement for its own sake, or taught the people to regard it as a sign of grace, which most assuredly Mr. Wesley never did. Nor is it correct to represent these effects, genuine and fictitious together, as peculiar to Methodism. Great and rapid results were produced in the first ages of Christianity, but not without 'outcries,' and strong corporeal as well as mental emotions. Like effects often accompanied the preaching of eminent men at the Reformation; and many of the Puritan and Nonconformist ministers had similar successes in our own country. In Scotland, and also among the grave Presbyterians of New England, previous to the rise of Methodism, the ministry of faithful men had been attended by very similar circumstances; and, on a smaller scale, the same results have followed the ministry of modern missionaries of different religious societies in various parts of the world. It may be laid down as a principle established by fact, that wherever a zealous and faithful ministry is raised up, after a long spiritual dearth, the early effects of that ministry are not only powerful, but often attended with extraordinary circumstances; nor are such extraordinary circumstances necessarily extravagances because they are not common. It is neither irrational nor unscriptural to suppose that times of great national darkness and depravity should require a strong remedy; and that the attention of the people should be roused by circumstances which could not fail to be noticed by the most unthinking. We do not attach primary importance to secondary circumstances; but they are not to be wholly disregarded. The Lord was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice; yet

that still, small voice might not have been heard, except by minds roused from their inattention by the shaking of the earth and the sounding of the storm."

Passing over the various and contradictory opinions of others, let us now see what Wesley wrote about the matter. "You deny," he said, "you deny that God does now work these effects; at least that He works them in this manner. I affirm both; because I have heard these things with my own ears, and have seen them with my own eyes. I have seen very many persons changed, in a moment, from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace; and from sinful desire, till then reigning over them, to the pure desire of doing the will of God. I know several persons in whom this great change was wrought in a dream, or during a strong representation to the eye of their mind of Christ either on the cross or in glory. This is the fact; let any judge of it as they please."[1]

In answer to the question why these things were permitted, Wesley says: "Perhaps it might be because of the hardness of our hearts, unready to receive anything unless we see it with our eyes and hear it with our ears, that God, in tender condescension to our weakness, suffered so many outward signs at the very time when He wrought this inward change to be continually seen and heard among us. But although they saw 'signs and wonders' (for so I may term them), yet many would not believe. They could not indeed deny the facts; but they could explain them away."

How were these extraordinary circumstances brought about?[2] Five years after, when he had heard all his enemies had to say, when such convulsive agitations no longer happened, and when time had tested the genuineness of those remarkable conversions, and he had been able to form a calm judgment about the whole matter, Wesley wrote:—

"The *extraordinary* circumstances that attended the con-

[1] *Wesley's Works.* [2] Tyerman.

viction or repentance of the people may be easily accounted for, either on principles of reason or Scripture. First, on principles of reason. For how easy is it to suppose that a strong, lively, and sudden apprehension of the heinousness of sin, the wrath of God, and the bitter pains of eternal death, should affect the body as well as the soul, during the present laws of vital union;—should interrupt or disturb the ordinary circulations and put nature out of its course? Yea, we may question whether, while this union subsists, it be possible for the mind to be affected, in so violent a degree, without some or other of those bodily symptoms following. Secondly, it is likewise easy to account for these things on principles of Scripture. For when we take a view of them in this light, we are to add to the consideration of natural causes the agency of those spirits who still excel in strength, and, as far as they have leave from God, will not fail to torment whom they cannot destroy; *to tear* those that *are coming* to Christ. It is also remarkable that there is plain Scripture precedent of every symptom which has lately appeared."

CHAPTER XXII.

OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION.

In August Wesley had a conference with the Bishop of Bristol, of which the following has been reported. First they discussed the subject of faith as the only necessary condition of a sinner's justification before God.

"Why, sir, our faith itself is a good work," said the Bishop; "it is a virtuous temper of mind."

"My lord, whatever faith is," replied Wesley, "our Church asserts we are justified by faith alone. But how it can be called a good work, I see not; it is the gift of God; and a gift that presupposes nothing in us but sin and misery."

"How, sir? Then you make God a tyrannical Being, if He justifies some without any goodness in them proceeding, and does not justify all. If these are not justified on account of some moral goodness in them, why are not those justified too?"

"Because, my lord, they resist His spirit; because they will not come to Him that they may have life; because they suffer Him not to work in them both to will and to do. They cannot be saved because they will not believe."

"Sir," said the Bishop, "what do you mean by faith?"

"My lord, by justifying faith I mean a conviction wrought in a man by the Holy Ghost, that *Christ* hath loved *him*, and given Himself for *him*, and that through *Christ*, *his* sins are forgiven."

"I believe some good men have this, but not all. But how do you prove this to be the justifying faith taught by our Church?"

"My lord, from her Homily on Salvation, where she describes it thus: '*A sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God.*'"

"Why, sir, this is quite another thing!"

"My lord, I conceive it to be the very same."

"Mr. Wesley, I will deal plainly with you. I once thought you and Mr. Whitefield well-meaning men; but I cannot think so now. For I have heard more of you; matters of fact, sir. And Mr. Whitefield says in his Journal, 'There are promises still to be fulfilled in me.' Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing!"

"My lord, for what Mr. Whitefield says, Mr. Whitefield, and not I, is accountable. I pretend to no extraordinary revelations, or gifts of the Holy Ghost; none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for. But I do not wonder your lordship has heard facts asserted which, if true, would prove the contrary; nor do I wonder that your lordship, believing them true, should alter the opinion you once had of me. A quarter of an hour I spent with your lordship before, and about an hour now; and perhaps you have never conversed one other hour with any one who spake in my favour. But how many with those who spake on the other side? so that your lordship could not but think as you do. But pray, my lord, what are those facts you have heard?"

"I hear you administer the Sacrament in your societies."

"My lord," replied Wesley, "I never did yet, and I believe never shall."

"I hear, too, many people fall into fits in your societies, and that you pray over them."

"I do so, my lord, when any show, by strong cries and tears, that their soul is in deep anguish; I frequently pray to God to deliver them from it, and our prayer is often heard in that hour."

"Very extraordinary indeed! Well, sir, since you ask my advice, I will give it freely. You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence."

"My lord," replied Wesley, "my business on earth is to do what good I can. Wherever, therefore, I think I can do most good, there must I stay, so long as I think so. At present, I think I can do most good here; therefore, here I stay. Being ordained a priest, by the commission I then received, I am a priest of the Church universal; and, being ordained as Fellow of a college, I was not limited to any particular cure, but have an indeterminate commission to preach the Word of God in any part of the Church of England. I conceive not therefore that in preaching here by this commission I break any human law. When I am convinced I do, then it will be time to ask, shall I obey God or man? But if I should be convinced in the meanwhile that I could advance the glory of God, and the salvation of souls in any other place more than Bristol, in that hour by God's help I go hence; which till then I may not do."[1]

About the same time there began to issue from the press sundry pamphlets and articles written against the Methodists, and especially the Methodist preachers. The first of these was a pamphlet of ninety-six pages, entitled "The Life of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, by an Impartial Hand." The impartiality was not evident, the hostility was; the object of the treatise being to make the subject of it "a mark for the shafts of ridicule."[2]

Then, in the *Weekly Miscellany* of July 21st, 1739, appeared an article which was even more malignant. "The Methodist preacher stands on an eminence," said the writer, "with admiring and subscribing crowds about him. He is young, which is good; looks innocent, which is better; and has no human learning, which is best of all." When we consider that

[1] *Wesley's Works.* [2] Tyerman.

the chief Methodist preacher, Wesley, was then thirty-six, had spent most of his life in striving after holiness, and was a distinguished Fellow of his Oxford College, we are astonished that an editor could be found who would insert such a libel in his journal! The article goes on to say—

"The Methodists are mad enthusiasts who teach for dictates of the Holy Spirit, seditions, heresies, and contempt of the ordinances of God and man. They are buffoons in religion, and mountebanks in theology; creatures who disclaim sense, and are below argument," and so on.

In the same year appeared a pamphlet in wretched doggerel, which was scurrilous in the extreme, and which we cannot sully our pages by describing. Then a certain James Bates, M.A., Rector of St. Paul's, Deptford, and formerly Chaplain to His Excellency Horatio Walpole, Esq., distinguished himself by producing two pamphlets, the first against Mr. Whitefield in particular, and the second entitled "Quakero-Methodism; or, a Confutation of the First Principles of the Quakers and Methodists." In the first, Whitefield is charged with causing numbers of poor tradesmen to leave their families to starve whilst they ramble about after him; he is also accused of violently dividing text from context in expounding the Word of God, so that he makes arrant nonsense of both; and finally, "he shuffles and prevaricates; treats the Bishop with saucy sneers; is guilty of flat falsehoods, disingenuous quirks, and mean evasions; perfidiously tramples upon the canons of the Church; and flies in the face of his diocesan with unparalleled pride and impudence." And the second pamphlet is equally abusive and untrue.

The magazines and newspapers of the period were filled with similar abuse of the poor Methodists. One paper complains that, "in Yorkshire, by the preaching of the Methodists, the spirit of enthusiasm had so prevailed that almost every man who could hammer out a chapter in the Bible had turned an expounder of the Scripture, to the great decay of

industry, and the almost ruin of the woollen manufacture, which seemed threatened with destruction for want of hands to work it."

Such, says Tyerman, were the premonitory mutterings of the storm in which the Methodist movement was cradled. Mobs threatened; newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals fulminated their malicious squibs; prelates, priests, and doctors of divinity became militant pamphleteers; but, in the midst of all, Wesley and his friends calmly proceeded in their glorious calling, though even those who were friendly towards them looked on their proceedings with alarm. Good Dr. Doddridge writes in a letter, dated May 24th, 1739:—

"I think the Methodists sincere; I hope some may be reformed, instructed, and made serious by their means. I saw Mr. Whitefield preaching on Kennington Common last week to an attentive multitude, and heard much of him at Bath; but, supposing him sincere and in good earnest, I still fancy that he is but a *weak* man—much too positive, says rash things, and is bold and enthusiastic. I am most heartily glad to hear that any *real* good is done anywhere to the souls of men; but whether these Methodists are in a right way—whether they are warrantable in all their conduct—whether poor people should be urged through different persons successively to pray from four in the morning till eleven at night, is not clear to me; and I am less satisfied with the high pretences they make to the Divine influence. I think what Mr. Whitefield says and does comes but little short of an assumption of inspiration or infallibility."

Sometimes the Methodists met with a friend. For instance, "godly Joseph Williams," of Kidderminster,[1] sympathised with their indefatigable endeavours to save the souls of their fellow-men, and on September 17th, 1739, he writes about the two Wesleys, Whitefield, and Ingham:—

"The common people flock to hear them, and in most

[1] Tyerman.

places hear them gladly. They commonly preach once or twice every day; and expound the Scriptures in the evening to religious societies, who have their society rooms on purpose." He then gives an account of his hearing Charles Wesley preach at Bristol. The preacher stood on a table in a field, and, with eyes and hands lifted up to Heaven, prayed with uncommon fervour and fluency. "He then preached about an hour," said Williams, "in such a manner as I have scarce ever heard any man preach. Though I have heard many a finer sermon, yet I think I never heard any man discover such evident signs of vehement desire (to benefit his hearers). With unusual fervour he acquitted himself as an ambassador for Christ; and although he used no notes, nor had anything in his hand but a Bible, yet he delivered his thoughts in a rich, copious variety of expression, and with so much propriety, that I could not observe anything incoherent through the whole performance, which he concluded with singing, prayer, and the usual benediction.

"Afterward I waited on him at Mr. Norman's. He received me in a very friendly manner. Before he would take any refreshment, he, with a few friends that waited on him, sung a hymn, and then prayed for a blessing, as at set meals. After tea we sung another hymn, and then I went with them to the religious society, and found the place so thronged that it was with great difficulty we reached the centre of it. We found them singing a hymn; he then prayed, and proceeded to expound the twelfth chapter of the Gospel of St. John in a sweet, savoury, spiritual manner. This was followed by singing another hymn; and he then prayed over a great number of bills presented by the society, about twenty of which respected spiritual cases. Never did I hear such praying. Never did I see or hear such evident marks of fervency in the service of God. At the close of every petition a serious 'Amen,' like a gentle, rushing sound of waters, ran through the whole audience. Such evident marks of a lively, fervent devotion I was never witness to before. If there be such a thing as

heavenly music upon earth, I heard it then. I do not remember my heart to have been so elevated in divine love and praise as it was there and then, for many years past, if ever. Notwithstanding some errors which as mere men they may be liable to, I cannot but believe that God is with them of a truth, and hath raised them up in this day of general defection from Gospel purity, simplicity, and zeal for signal service and usefulness in His Church."

On his first arrival at Bristol, Wesley introduced that part of the Wesleyan discipline which he had adopted from the Moravians, and male and female bands were formed as in London, that the members might meet together weekly, to confess their faults one to another, and pray one for another. "How dare any man," says Wesley, "deny this to be, as to the substance of it, a means of grace ordained by God? unless he will affirm with Luther, in the fury of his Solifidianism, that St. James's epistle is an 'epistle of straw.'"

Watson says of these band meetings that they were small companies of serious persons of the same sex and in the same conditions of life, whether married or single, who "meet occasionally to converse with each other on their religious state, and to engage in mutual prayer. They are founded on the injunction of St. James, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.' Whatever objection may be made to these meetings as a formal part of discipline (though with us they are only *recommended*, not enjoined), the principle of them is to be found in this passage of Scripture. They have been compared to the auricular confession of the Papists, but ignorantly enough; for the confession is in itself essentially different, and it is not made to a minister, but takes place among private Christians to each other, and is, in fact, nothing more than a general declaration of the religious experience of the week. Nor is the abuse of the passage in St. James to the purpose of superstition a reason sufficient for neglecting that friendly confession

of faults by Christians to each other which may engage their prayers in each other's behalf. The founders of the National Church did not come to this sweeping conclusion, notwithstanding all their zeal against the confession of the Romish Church. In the Homily on Repentance it is said, 'We ought to confess our weakness and infirmities one to another, to the end that, knowing each other's frailness, we may the more earnestly pray together unto Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, that He will vouchsafe to pardon our infirmities, for His Son Jesus Christ's sake.' For the principle of this institution, Mr. Wesley might therefore plead the authority of the Church of which he was a clergyman; and if the manner of carrying the principle into effect were free from sound objection, a formal institution for this purpose can no more be condemned than the principle itself."

Still the meetings of these bands, or societies as they were often called, were looked upon by many with suspicion and even abhorrence. Only we find one "good and virtuous" clergyman giving the excellent advice to his people, "Not to censure any professed members of our Church *who live good lives*, for resorting to religious assemblies in private houses, to perform in society acts of *divine worship*, when the same seems to have been practised by the primitive Christians; and when, alas, there are so many parishes where a person *piously* disposed has no opportunity of joining in the public service of our Church more than one hour and a half in a week."

The same clergyman advises, "Not to condemn those who are constant attendants on the *communion* and *service* of our Church if they sometimes use other prayers in private assemblies, since the best divines of our Church have composed and published many *prayers* that have not the sanction of public authority, which implies a general consent that our Church has not made provision for every private occasion."

Mr. Wesley often wished that those who wrote and preached against him would attend to those rules which were drawn up,

with some others, by their good Author, to guide people in their treatment of the Methodists.

To make matters worse, Wesley's eldest sister Emilia, who had always been accustomed to correspond with him, and for whose opinions he had much respect, wrote to him very angrily about this time, abusing the Methodists as bad people, and telling him she understood he could work miracles, cast out devils, etc.

Dr. Whitehead's comment upon this is as simple as it is beautiful:—

"Mr. Wesley knew in whom he had believed, and in the midst of abuse poured out upon him by friends and enemies, went on his way as if he heard not."

WESLEY'S TABLE.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DEATH OF SAMUEL WESLEY.

BEFORE Wesley went to Herrnhuth, he had related to his mother the particulars of his conversion, for which she "heartily blessed God who had brought him to so just a way of thinking." But it happened that, after his return from Germany, nine months elapsed before he was able to visit her, and in the meantime she had been prejudiced against him, and had entertained "strange fears concerning him, being convinced that he had greatly erred from the faith."

All her fears, however, appear to have left her when she came to London and saw her beloved son, at last, in September; and he records in his Journal:—

"1739, September 3rd.—I talked largely with my mother, who told me that, till a short time since, she had scarce heard such a thing mentioned as the having God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit: much less did she imagine that this was the common privilege of all true believers. 'Therefore,' said she, 'I never durst ask it for myself. But two or three weeks ago, while my son Hall was pronouncing these words, in delivering the cup to me, "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee," the words struck through my heart, and I knew God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven me all my sins.'

"I asked whether her father (Dr. Annesley) had not the same faith; and whether she had not heard him preach it to others. She answered, he had it himself; and declared, a little before his death, that, for more than forty years, he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt at all of his being accepted

in the Beloved. But that, nevertheless, she did not remember to have heard him preach, no, not once, explicitly upon it: whence she supposed he also looked upon it as the peculiar blessing of a few; not as promised to all the people of God."

From that time Mrs. Wesley resided chiefly in London, and attended the ministry of her sons, John and Charles. She heartily embraced their doctrines, and on one occasion stood by John's side on Kennington Common, in the midst of twenty thousand people. Samuel Wesley was very much grieved at all this, and wrote to her in October—only seventeen days before his death:—

"My brothers are now become so notorious, that the world will be curious to know when and where they were born, what schools bred at, what colleges of in Oxford, and when matriculated, what degrees they took, and where, when, and by whom ordained. I wish they may spare so much time as to vouchsafe a little of their story. For my own part, I had much rather have them picking straws within the walls than preaching in the area of Moorfields.

"It was with exceeding concern and grief I heard you had countenanced a spreading delusion, so far as to be one of Jack's congregation. Is it not enough that I am bereft of both my brothers, but must my mother follow too? I earnestly beseech the Almighty to preserve you from joining a schism at the close of your life, as you were unfortunately engaged in one at the beginning of it. It will cost you many a protest should you retain your integrity, as I hope to God you will. They boast of you already as a disciple.

"They design separation. They are already forbidden all the pulpits in London, and to preach in that diocese is actual schism. In all likelihood it will come to the same all over England, if the bishops have courage enough. They leave off the liturgy in the fields; and though Mr. Whitefield expresses his value for it, he never once read it to his tatterdemalions

on a common. Their societies are sufficient to dissolve all other societies but their own. Will any man of common sense or spirit suffer any domestic to be in a band engaged to relate to five or ten people everything, without reserve, that concerns the person's conscience, how much soever it may concern the family? Ought any married people to be there, unless husband and wife be there together? This is literally putting asunder whom God hath joined together.

"As I told Jack, I am not afraid the Church should excommunicate him (discipline is at too low an ebb), but that he should excommunicate the Church. It is pretty near it. Holiness and good works are not so much as conditions of our acceptance with God. Love-feasts are introduced, and extemporary prayers and expositions of Scripture, which last are enough to bring in all confusion; nor is it likely they will want any miracles to support them. He only who ruleth the madness of the people can stop them from being a formed sect. Ecclesiastical censures have lost their terrors; thank fanaticism on the one hand and Atheism on the other. To talk of persecution from thence is mere insult. It is—

> "'To call the bishop, Grey-beard Goff,
> And make his power as mere a scoff
> As Dagon, when his hands were off.'

My sister Hall has written to me on the subject, whom I will answer as soon as ever I can. In the meantime I shall be glad to hear from you, and beg your blessing upon us and ours, and your prayers, that we may be safely guided through the painful remnant of our lives, and arrive by Christ's mercies to everlasting happiness."

Sixteen days afterwards, having gone to bed in fairly good health, Samuel Wesley was taken ill at three o'clock in the morning, and died, after four hours' suffering, at the age of forty-nine. He was a clever and sensible man, although he did not appreciate the wonderful work which his brothers had

begun, and in which they encountered so much opposition, but rather took alarm at some of their extravagances which others did not fail to acquaint him with.

Mrs. Clarke mentions the interesting fact that St. George's Hospital owes its existence to Samuel Wesley. She says:—"It was originally an infirmary, the first in Westminster, and was founded in 1719 mainly through his untiring exertions. Hyde Park Corner thus bears witness to the triumphs of two kinsmen, one of whom was an adept in the arts of war, and the other in those of peace."

When John Wesley, who was in London, received the news of his brother's death, he is said to have actually started off to meet Charles, who was then at Bristol, and go with him to Tiverton to see their widowed sister-in-law, without communicating the sad news to his mother, who was ill in her own room (she lived at the Foundry then). John had often been rallied by his relatives about his reticence as to family matters, but it may have been that, in this case, he had not the heart to tell his mother, for all the family knew how dearly she loved her eldest child, and what a pattern son he had been to her.[1] Possibly John commissioned one of his sisters to tell her gently. How she bore it, she herself told Charles:—

"*November* 29, 1739.

"DEAR CHARLES,—Upon the first hearing of your brother's death, I did immediately acquiesce in the will of God, without the least reluctance. Only I marvelled that Jacky did not inform me of it before he left, since he knew thereof; but he was unacquainted with the manner of God's dealing with me in extraordinary cases, which indeed is no wonder, for though I have so often experienced His infinite mercy and power in my support, and inward calmness of spirit when the trial would otherwise have been too strong for me, yet His ways of working are to myself incomprehensible and ineffable."

[1] Mrs. Clarke.

The mother would be greatly consoled too in hearing from her sons that they were told at Tiverton that several days before Samuel died, "God had given him a calm and full assurance of his interest in Christ."

About a month afterwards Mrs. Wesley wrote again to Charles at Bristol :—

"DEAR CHARLES,—You cannot more desire to see me than I do to see you. Your brother, whom I shall henceforth call son Wesley, since my dear Sam is gone home, has just been with me, and much revived my spirits. Indeed, I have often found that he never speaks in my hearing without my receiving some spiritual benefit. But his visits are seldom and short, for which I never blame him, because I know he is well employed, and, blessed be God, hath great success in his ministry. But, my dear Charles, still I want either him or you; for indeed, in the most literal sense, I am become a little child, and want continual succour. 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend.' I feel much comfort and support from religious conversation when I can obtain it. Formerly I rejoiced in the absence of company, and found the less I had of creature comforts the more I had from God. But, alas! I am fallen from that spiritual converse I once enjoyed. . . . I complained I had none to converse with me on spiritual things, but for these several days I have had the conversation of many good Christians, who have refreshed in some measure my fainting spirits; and though they hindered my writing, yet it was a pleasing, and I hope not an unprofitable, interruption they gave me. I hope we shall shortly speak face to face; and I shall then, if God permit, impart my thoughts more fully. But then, alas, when you come, your brother leaves me. Yet that is the will of God, in whose blessed service you are engaged, who has hitherto blessed your labours, and preserved your persons. That He may continue so to prosper your work and protect you both from evil, and give you strength and courage to

preach the true Gospel in opposition to the united prayers of evil men and evil angels, is the hearty prayer of,

"Dear Charles, your loving mother,

"SUSANNA WESLEY."

After John and Charles Wesley had visited their bereaved sister at Tiverton, they proceeded to Exeter, as they had been invited there; and the next day, Sunday, John preached in the morning at St. Mary's Church, on "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." As usual, after the sermon, Dr. W—— told him, "Sir, you must not preach in the afternoon. Not," he added, "that you preach any false doctrine. I allow all that you have said is true. And it is the doctrine of the Church of England. But it is not guarded. It is dangerous. It may lead people into enthusiasm or despair."

About this time Wesley stated his doctrinal views in a very clear, concise manner. He said:—

"A serious clergyman desired to know in what points we differed from the Church of England. I answered, 'To the best of my knowledge, in none; the doctrines we preach are the doctrines of the Church of England, indeed the fundamental doctrines of the Church, clearly laid down both in her Prayers, Articles, and Homilies.'

"He asked, 'In what points, then, do you differ from the other clergy of the Church of England?' I answered, 'In none from that part of the clergy who adhere to the doctrines of the Church; but from that part of the clergy who dissent from the Church (though they own it not) I differ in the points following:—

"'First, they speak of justification, either as the same thing with sanctification, or as something consequent upon it. I believe justification to be wholly distinct from sanctification, and necessarily antecedent to it.

"'Secondly, they speak of our own holiness or good works as the cause of our justification; or that for the sake of which,

on account of which, we are justified before God. I believe neither our own holiness nor good works are any part of the cause of our justification; but that the death and righteousness of Christ are the whole and sole cause of it; or that for the sake of which, on account of which, we are justified before God.

"'Thirdly, they speak of good works as a condition of justification, necessarily previous to it. I believe no good work can be previous to justification, nor, consequently, a condition of it; but that we are justified (being till that hour ungodly, and therefore incapable of doing any good work) by faith alone; faith, *though producing all*, yet including no good works.

"'Fourthly, they speak of sanctification, or holiness, as if it were an outward thing; as if it consisted chiefly, if not wholly, in these two points: 1. The doing no harm; 2. The doing good, as it is called; that is, the using the means of grace and helping our neighbour. I believe it to be an inward thing, namely, "The life of God in the soul of man; a participation of the Divine nature; the mind that was in Christ;" or "The renewal of our heart after the image of Him that created us."

"'Lastly, they speak of the new birth as an outward thing; as if it were no more than baptism, or, at most, a change from outward wickedness to outward goodness—from a vicious to what is called a virtuous life. I believe it to be an inward thing; a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness; an entire change of our inmost nature from the image of the devil, wherein we were born, to the image of God; a change from the love of the creature to the love of the Creator, from earthly and sensual to heavenly and holy affections; in a word, a change from the tempers of the spirits of darkness to those of the angels of God in heaven.

"'There is therefore a wide, essential, fundamental, irreconcilable difference between us: so that if they speak the truth

as it is in Jesus, I am found a false witness before God; but if I teach the way of God in truth, they are blind leaders of the blind.'"

A terribly lonely thought that must have been for Wesley! To himself he seemed to stand on one side, while behind him was a little band of helpers and followers, and on the other side were almost all his fellow-clergymen in the Church of England. One true and the other false!—and between them were the masses of the people sunk in sloth, and ignorance, and degradation. Was it any wonder that Wesley worked and prayed by day and night—what faithful man could do otherwise with such a conviction in his soul?

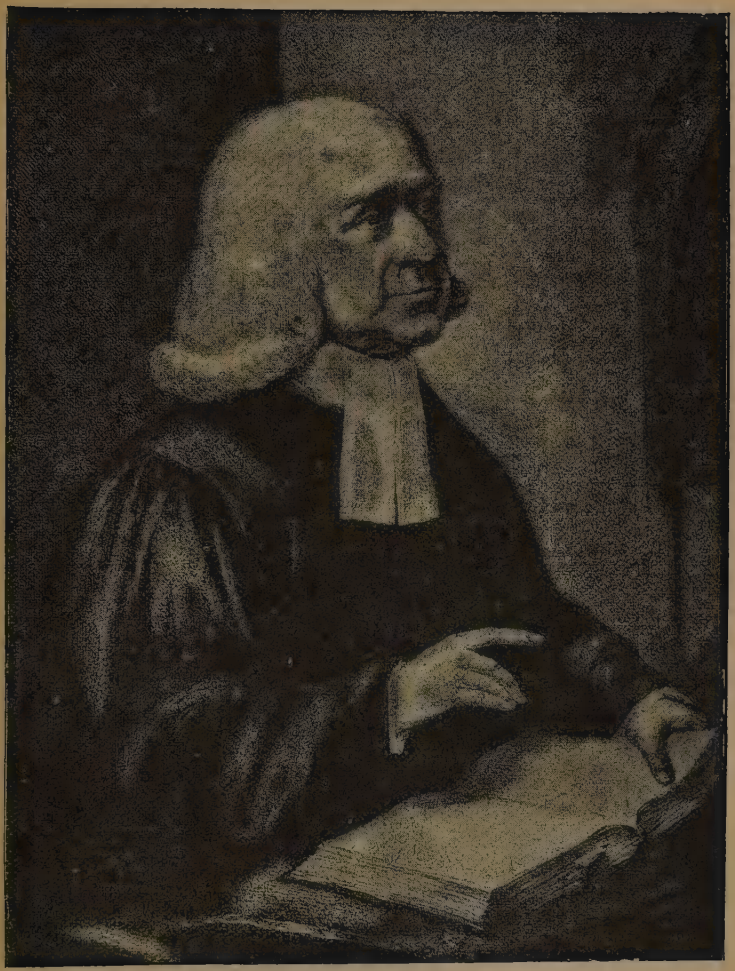
WESLEY'S CHAIR.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEPARATION FROM THE MORAVIANS.

In the early stages[1] of his career Wesley was content to leave the good done by his ministry to the care of the clergymen of the parish in which the persons who received it dwelt. Afterwards, we have seen that he formed bands and societies for the mutual assistance of his converts, and these were usually left in the charge of persons who would instruct them in religious matters. In these days the Church provides for the careful instruction and religious fellowship of her members; in those "the clergy in general made no such provision for the religiously-disposed people of their parishes; and hence, asks Mr. Wesley, 'what was to be done in a case of so extreme necessity? No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was to find some one among themselves who was upright in heart, and of sound judgment in the things of God, and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them as he was able in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.' Now surely any mind rightly influenced would consider assemblies of people for such purposes, in so many parishes in the kingdom where nothing of the kind before existed, and where these very persons but a little time before were spending their leisure in idleness or in vice, as a most gratifying occurrence, both for the benefit of the individuals themselves, and the effect of their example upon others. It would indeed have been more satisfactory if a pious clergyman had put himself at the head of these meetings, afforded the people his counsel,

[1] Watson.



JOHN WESLEY AS HE PREACHED AT ST. GILES', LONDON.

and restrained any irregularities or errors which might arise; and had clergymen so qualified or disposed been found, the Church would have reaped the full benefit of Mr. Wesley's labours, and no separation in any form would have ensued. Unhappily, they did not exist; and Mr. Wesley submitted to the irregularity, to avoid the greater evil of suffering those who had been brought under religious influence to fall away for want of care and instruction. That superintendence which the clergy were not disposed to give he supplied as much as possible by his occasional visits, and it was more regularly afforded, after the employment of his own preachers, by their regular visits under his direction. In these measures there was no *intention* of a separation from the Church. . . . He [Mr. Wesley] took care, and all his principles and feelings favoured the caution, that no obstacles should be placed in the way of the closest connection of the societies with the Establishment. None of their services were held in the hours of her public service; the Methodists formed in many parishes the great body of her communicants; thousands of them died in her communion; and the preachers, though separated to the work by solemn prayer and a mode of ordination, though without imposition of hands, were not permitted to administer either of the sacraments to the people among whom they laboured."[1]

We have given this long extract because it shows how wise and just were the regulations Wesley made, and how alien to his purpose was the idea of separating from the Church. In these more enlightened days, ah! how gladly would such a mission preacher as he be welcomed by all, both High and Low Church clergymen, who are animated by the true spirit of Christianity!

But the success of the work of the societies Wesley found depended in a great measure upon the leaders who were chosen to look after them during his absence. The affairs of

[1] Watson.

the first organised society in Fetter Lane fell into confusion, again and again, during his absence in Bristol, and when he came to town much of his time was taken up in trying to restore order. Charles Wesley was for a time the pastor of the London Moravians and Methodists, but conjoined with him was Philip Henry Molther, who was the Moravian favourite.

Molther was a native of Alsace, and a divinity student of the University of Jena, who had been the private tutor of Count Zinzendorf's only son. He was now an ordained Moravian minister, and he arrived in London in October 1739, on his way to Pennsylvania. Böhler had then left England, and the people were anxious to hear Molther preach. At first he spoke to them in Latin with the help of an interpreter, but soon became able to make himself understood in English. Molther was much dissatisfied with the Fetter Lane Moravians. The first time he entered their meeting, he was alarmed and almost terror-stricken at "their sighing and groaning, their whining and howling, which strange proceeding they called the demonstration of the spirit of power." A man who could speak thus of those manifestations which Wesley looked upon as signs of the working of "the spirit of power," was not likely to get on well with him. Molther, however, soon became popular; not only was the meeting-house filled with hearers, but the courtyard also. About a fortnight after his arrival Wesley came over from Bristol, and he says in his Journal that, when he came to London, the first person he met there was one whom he had left strong in faith and zealous of good works, but who now told him, "Mr. Molther had fully convinced her she never had any faith at all; and had advised her, till she received faith, to be still, ceasing from outward works; which she had accordingly done, and did not doubt but in a short time she should find the advantage of it."

"In the evening," Wesley continues, "Mr. Bray also was

highly commending 'the being still before the Lord.' He likewise spoke largely of the great danger that attended the doing of outward works, and of the folly of people that kept running about to Church and Sacrament, as I (said he) did till very lately."

"Sunday, 4th.—Our Society met at seven in the morning and continued silent till eight. One then spoke of looking unto Jesus, and exhorted us all 'to lie still in His hand.'

"In the evening I met the women of our Society at Fetter Lane, where some of our brethren strongly intimated that none of them had any true faith, and then asserted in plain terms—1. 'That till they had true faith they ought to be still; that is, as they explained themselves, to abstain from the means of grace, as they are called; the Lord's Supper in particular.' 2. 'That the ordinances are not means of grace, there being no other means than Christ.'"

On the following Wednesday, Wesley, "being greatly desirous to understand the ground of this matter," had a long conference with one of the new teachers, Mr. Spanenberg.

"I agreed," he says, "with all he said of the power of faith. I agreed that whatsoever is by faith born of God, doth not commit sin; but I could not agree either, 'that none has any faith, so long as he is liable to any doubt or fear; or that, till we have it, we ought to abstain from the Lord's Supper, or the other ordinances of God.'"

When the Society met that evening, they sat an hour without speaking, and then began disputing.

After that, Wesley observed every day more and more the advantage Satan had gained over them.

"Many of those," he says, "who once knew in whom they had believed were thrown into idle reasonings, and thereby filled with doubts and fears, from which they now found no way to escape. Many were induced to deny the gift of God, and affirm they never had any faith at all; especially those who had fallen again into sin, and of consequence into darkness.

And almost all these had left off the means of grace, saying 'they must now cease from their own works; they must now trust in Christ alone; they were poor sinners, and had nothing to do but to lie at His feet.'"

Till Saturday, the 10th, Wesley adds, he did not find one woman of the Society who had not been on the point of casting away her confidence in God. However, on that day he found one who, although others had laboured hard to persuade her she had no faith, replied, "with a spirit they could not resist, 'I know that the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me; and He has never left me one moment since the hour He was made known to me in the breaking of bread.'"

All that week Wesley was busy exhorting the Society to use the means of grace, to wait upon God "by lowliness, meekness, and resignation, in all the ways of His holy law and the works of His commandments," and also by privately endeavouring "to comfort the feeble-minded, and to bring back the lame which had been turned out of the way, if haply it might be healed."

Then he went back to Bristol, but in December was again summoned to London by an appeal to him on account of the wranglings and divisions of the Fetter Lane Society.

"Wednesday, 19th," he writes, "I accordingly came to London, though with a heavy heart. Here I found every day the dreadful effects of our brethren's reasonings and disputings with each other. Scarce one in ten retained his first love; and most of the rest were in the utmost confusion, biting and devouring one another. I pray God ye be not consumed one of another."

"One came to me," says Wesley, the following Sunday, "by whom I used to profit much. But her conversation was now too high for me. It was far above, out of my sight. My soul is sick of this sublime divinity! Let me think and speak as a little child! Let my religion be plain, artless, simple! Meekness, temperance, patience, faith, and love, be these my

highest gifts; and let the highest words wherein I teach them, be those I learn from the book of God!"

The next day Wesley had "a long and particular conversation" with Mr. Molther himself, weighed all his words with the utmost care, desired him to explain what he did not understand, and, after having obtained as exact a knowledge as possible of his doctrine and teaching, returned home, and after praying for Divine aid, wrote down, in his usual clear and logical way, an exact statement of each of their views respecting faith. The Moravians sought it in "waiting for Christ and not using what we term the means of grace, not going to church, not communicating, not fasting, not reading the Scripture;" he sought it by doing all these things:—

"To go to church;

"To communicate;

"To fast;

"To use as much private prayer as he could; and,

"To read the Scripture;

"Because I believe these are 'means of grace'—*i.e.*, do ordinarily convey God's grace to unbelievers; and that it is possible for a man to use them without trusting in them."

Much harm, Wesley went on to say, had been done by the teaching of the Moravians; "many who were beginning to build holiness and good works on the true foundation of faith in Jesus being now wholly unsettled, and lost in vain reasoning and doubtful disputations; many others being brought to a false unscriptural stillness, so that they are not likely to come to any true foundation; and many being grounded on a faith that is without works, so that they who were right before are wrong now."

The next day Wesley writes:—"Jan. 1, 1740.—I endeavoured to explain to our brethren, the true, Christian, Scriptural 'stillness,' by largely unfolding these solemn words, 'Be still, and know that I am God.'" And on "Wednesday, 2nd.—I

earnestly besought them all to stand in the old paths; and no longer to subvert one another's souls by idle controversies and strife of words. They all seemed convinced. We then cried to God to heal our backslidings. And He sent forth such a spirit of peace and love as we had not known for many months before."

Molther requested Wesley to furnish him with a translation of a German hymn; and the well-known one, "Now I have found the ground wherein," was the result.[1] Molther, in writing to thank the translator, utters devout wishes—clothed in very mystical language—that Wesley may increase in knowledge, and have "entire satisfaction" according to his (Molther's) views.

Being summoned again to Fetter Lane, towards the end of March, by letters which informed him that the poor brethren were in great confusion and earnestly desired his presence, Wesley returned to them; but he shall tell the whole story in his own graphic way.

"Monday, 21st (April).—I set out, and the next evening reached London. Wednesday, 23rd, I went to Mr. Simpson. He told me 'all the confusion was owing to my brother, who would preach up the ordinances; whereas believers (said he) are not subject to ordinances; and unbelievers have nothing to do with them. They ought to be still; otherwise they will be unbelievers all the days of their life.'

"After a fruitless dispute of about two hours, I returned home with a heavy heart. Mr. Molther was taken ill this day. I believe it was the hand of God that was upon him. In the evening our society met, but cold, weary, heartless, dead. I found nothing of brotherly love among them now, but a harsh, dry, heavy, stupid spirit. For two hours they looked one at another, when they looked up at all, as if one half of them was afraid of the other; yea, as if a voice were sounding in their ears, 'Take heed ye every one of his neighbour; trust ye

[1] Tyerman.

not in any brother. For every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.'

"I think not so few as thirty persons spoke to me in these two days, who had been strongly solicited—1. To deny what God had done for their souls; to own they never had living faith. 2. To be still till they had it, to leave off all the means of grace, not to go to church, not to communicate, not to search the Scriptures, not to use private prayer; at least not so much, or not vocally, or not at any stated times.

"Friday.—My brother and I went to Mr. Molther again, and spent two hours in conversation with him. He now also explicitly affirmed—1. That there are no degrees in faith; that none has any faith who has ever any doubt or fear, and that none is justified till he has a clean heart, with the perpetual indwelling of Christ and of the Holy Ghost;—and 2. That every one who has not this, ought, till he has it, to be still; that is, as he explained it, not to use the ordinances, or means of grace, so called. He also expressly asserted—1. That to those who have a clean heart the ordinances are not matter of duty. They are not commanded to use them, they are free; they may use them, or they may not. 2. That those who have not a clean heart ought not to use them (particularly not to communicate), because God neither commands nor designs they should (commanding them to none, designing them only for believers), and because they are not means of grace, there being no such thing as means of grace, but Christ only.

"Ten or twelve persons spoke to me this day also, and many more the day following, who had been greatly troubled by this new Gospel, and thrown into the utmost heaviness; and indeed wherever I went I found more and more proofs of the grievous confusion it had occasioned; many coming to me day by day who were once full of peace and love, but were now again plunged into doubts and fears, and driven even to their wits' end.

"I was now utterly at a loss what course to take, finding no

rest for the sole of my foot. These vain janglings pursued me wherever I went, and were always sounding in my ears.

"Wednesday, 30th.—I went to my friend (that was!), Mr. St——, at Islington. But he also immediately entered upon the subject, telling me 'now he was fully assured that no one has any degree of faith till he is perfect as God is perfect.' I asked, 'Have you, then, no degree of faith?' He said, 'No, for I have not a clean heart.' I turned and asked his servant, 'Esther, have you a clean heart?' She said, 'No, my heart is desperately wicked; but I have no doubt or fear; I know my Saviour loves me, and I love Him; I feel it every moment.' I then plainly told her master, 'Here is an end of your reasoning; this is the state the existence of which you deny.'

"Thence I went to the little society here, which had stood untainted from the beginning. But the plague was now spread to them also. One of them, who had been long full of joy in believing, now denied she had any faith at all, and said 'till she had, she would communicate no more.' Another who said 'she had the faith that overcometh the world,' added, 'she had not communicated for some weeks, and it was all one to her whether she did or no, for a believer was not subject to ordinances.'

"In the evening, one of the first things stated at Fetter Lane was the question concerning the ordinances. But I entreated we might not be always disputing, but rather give ourselves unto prayer.

"I endeavoured all this time, both by explaining in public those Scriptures which had been misunderstood, and by private conversation, to bring back those that had been led out of the way; and having now delivered my own soul, on Friday, May 2nd, I left London."

"Of course it did not mend matters"—*i.e.*, Wesley's strenuous exertions—says a modern commentator. "They had got to that pitch, which indeed is very soon reached in religious controversy, when argument had done what little it can do, and

those who attempt to carry it further merely repeat the same words with increased irritation. It was plain, any further attempt at union was a mere aimless sacrifice of what was most distinct in Wesley's ideal for the sake of a union that could only be artificial."

In June, Wesley again came to London, and found the society in Fetter Lane even in a worse state than before.

"Finding there was no time to delay," he writes in his Journal, "without utterly destroying the cause of God, I began to execute what I had long designed,—to strike at the root of the grand delusion. Accordingly, from these words of Jeremiah, 'Stand ye in the way, ask for the old paths,' I took occasion to give a plain account, both of the work which God had begun among us, and of the manner wherein the enemy had sown his tares among the good seed," and he proceeds to give the same account of his differences with the Moravians as he had given in the statement he drew up on the 31st of December, but accompanied by severe expressions of rebuke.

For the next few days he continued to exhort and reprove them. On Friday, 27th, he preached on, "Do this in remembrance of me," saying:—"In the ancient Church, every one who was baptised communicated daily. So in the Acts we read, 'They all continued daily in the breaking of bread, and in prayer,'" and proceeding to show that our Lord himself in the first instance gave His Supper to those "who had not yet received the Holy Ghost," and arguing from that (on the next day) that the Lord's Supper was ordained by God, to be a means of conveying to men, either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities. 2. That the persons for whom it was ordained are all those who know and feel that they want the grace of God either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God, and so on.

But this was distasteful teaching to Molther's disciples, and when, on the 16th of the month, the brethren met together at

Fetter Lane, the chasm between them was too wide to be bridged over any more.

Wesley had taken with him a book of mystic divinity they were in the habit of using, and he read aloud the following extract:—"The Scriptures are good; prayer is good; communicating is good; relieving our neighbour is good; but to one who is not born of God, none of these is good, but all very evil. For him to read the Scriptures, or to pray, or to communicate, or to do any outward work, is deadly poison. First, let him be born of God; till then let him not do any of these things; for if he does, he destroys himself."

"My brethren," asked Wesley, after reading this distinctly two or three times over, "is this right or is it wrong?"

"It is right, it is all right," exclaimed one of the members; "to this we must all come, or we can never come to Christ."

Another brother suggested that perhaps the speaker had not quite understood what Mr. Wesley said, but the man declared he had, and the other members seem to have agreed with him, for many "laboured to prove" both John and Charles Wesley laid too much stress upon the ordinances. After some confused discussion, the question was put to the meeting whether John Wesley should be allowed to preach in Fetter Lane. After a short debate, the answer was given—

"No; this place is taken for the Germans."

Upon which "some asked 'whether the Germans had converted any soul in England? Whether they had not done us much hurt, instead of good, raising a division of which we could see no end? And whether God did not many times use Mr. Wesley for the healing of our divisions, when we were all in confusion?'"

"Confusion! What do you mean? We were never in any confusion at all!" replied several.

"You ought not to say so," said Wesley to one of these, "because I have your letters now in my hand."

They continued in useless debate till about eleven, when the meeting broke up.

The next day, Friday, the 18th, Wesley writes—"A few of us joined with my mother in the great sacrifice of thanksgiving; and then consulted how to proceed with regard to our poorer brethren of Fetter Lane. We all saw the thing was now come to a crisis, and were therefore unanimously agreed what to do."

The following Sunday evening, therefore, Wesley went to the love-feast in Fetter Lane, and at the conclusion of it read a document he had again drawn up, which stated clearly the difference between their views and his own. It ended with these words:—

"I believe these assertions" (the assertions which they made) "to be flatly contrary to the word of God. I have warned you hereof again and again, and besought you to turn back to the law and the testimony. I have borne with you long, hoping you would turn; but as I find you more confirmed in the error of your ways, nothing now remains but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me."[1]

And then, without saying anything more, Wesley withdrew, and was followed by eighteen or nineteen of the society.

Molther's account of the separation was of course somewhat different. "In 1740," he says, "John Wesley attacked the society with a view of confounding it. But as most of the members loved the doctrine of our Saviour, and the atonement in His blood, his efforts remained fruitless; and, perceiving his object to be foiled, he separated from the society, exclaiming, 'Whoever belongs to the Lord, let him follow me.'"[2]

Soon after quitting the Fetter Lane Society Wesley received a letter from one of the Herrnhuth Moravians, ordering him no longer to take upon him the position of a teacher, but to give up this to the Moravians, who alone were fit for it. The letter was extremely abusive; but Wesley's answer returns none of the railing. It bears this superscription:—

[1] *Wesley's Journal.* [2] J. Wedgewood.

JOHN WESLEY AND COUNT ZINZENDORF.

"From John Wesley, a presbyter of the Church of God in England, to the Church of God at Herrnhuth, in Upper Lusatia;" and is very humble in its commencement. "It may seem strange," he writes, "that such a one as I am should take upon me to write to you. You I believe to be children of God, through faith which is in Jesus; me you believe (as some of you have declared) to be a child of the devil, a servant of corruption. Yet whatsoever I am, or whatsoever you are, I beseech you to weigh the following words, if haply God, 'who sendeth by whom He will send,' may give you light thereby, although the 'mist of darkness,' as one of you affirm, should be reserved for me for ever." He then goes on to arrange under fifteen heads the offences of the Moravians, the chief of which we have already mentioned, but Wesley also includes their wearing gold and silver ornaments, and joining in worldly diversions in order to do good. The brethren do not appear to have denied one of these charges, but, in explanation of Wesley's having heard some of the Moravians affirm that the salvation of faith implied liberty from the commandments of God, they say, "All things which are a *commandment* to the natural man, are a *promise* to him that has been justified."

Wesley had his last interview with Zinzendorf on September 30th, 1741, in Gray's Inn Walks, then a public garden. We have only Wesley's account of the meeting.

"Why have you changed your religion?" asked Zinzendorf.

Of course Wesley said he did not know that he had. "Who," said he, "has given that account of me?"

"You yourself," replied the Count; "in your letter to us you say that true Christians are not poor sinners; this is utterly false. The best of men are miserable sinners till death; if any one says otherwise, they are either mere impostors or seduced by the devil. You have attacked our brethren for teaching better things, and when they sought peace from you you refused it."

"I do not understand what you mean," said Wesley.

Upon which Zinzendorf began a review of their intercourse, saying, "I loved you much when you wrote to me from Georgia, and recognised your simplicity of heart, but saw that it was accompanied by confused ideas. When you came to see us, your ideas were more than ever confused." He then went on talking about some personal matters, which Wesley put aside as irrelevant and brought him back to the matter they were discussing by saying that he feared the Moravians erred both as to not aiming at Christian perfection and not prizing the means of grace.

"I allow of no inherent perfection in this life!" cried Zinzendorf. "All our perfection is imputed, not inherent. This is the error of errors, which I follow with fire and sword through the whole world. Whoever follows inherent perfection denies Christ."

"Surely we are disputing about words," replied Wesley, and then proceeded to ask if every true believer was not holy if he did not live a holy life, and if his heart was not sanctified if he did not love God with all his heart, and serve Him with all his strength; and, when Count Zinzendorf replied in the affirmative, urged this was all he contended for.

But this, said Zinzendorf, was all legal sanctity, not evangelic, and the Christian did not grow in holiness as he grew in love.

"Surely," said Wesley, "the love of God increased in the heart of the true believer."

Even this Zinzendorf vehemently denied. As lead changed into gold was not more gold on the second day than the first, thus, he said, it was with the heart of the believer.

"I thought we were to grow in grace," urged Wesley.

"In grace, but not in holiness."

"Perhaps I do not understand you. In denying ourselves, do we not die more and more to the world and live to God?"

"We reject all self-denial," exclaimed Zinzendorf, thoroughly roused; "we trample it under foot. We do, as believers,

whatever we like, and nothing besides; we laugh at all mortification."

Wesley here put an end to the useless conversation by saying he would think over what Zinzendorf had said.

The biographer, to whom we owe much assistance in relating this episode,[1] tells us that Zinzendorf's last words are repeated in a pamphlet written by him in 1755 in English, with the spirit of which Wesley would no doubt have agreed, for it contained the following words:—

"It was no self-denial to my Saviour, nor any mortification to lead a holy life in this world. When He, dying for us, abolished our guilt and pain, He obtained for all partakers of His merits the privilege to sin no more, and to live in this world as He would have lived Himself, had He lived in our station and our times. So I also scorn heartily the doing good by way of self-denial and mortification."

Towards the close of his life Wesley was more just and gentle in his attitude towards the Moravian leader than he was for a long time after he separated from them. His last notice of Zinzendorf was in a sermon on knowing Christ after the flesh, and he mentions him as "a late great man, whose memory I love and esteem."[1]

[1] J. Wedgewood.

CHAPTER XXV.

SEPARATION FROM WHITEFIELD.

FROM time to time Wesley was harassed with monetary responsibilities which he took upon himself for the sake of the great work in which he was engaged. It has been said that Whitefield was the cause of the Kingswood School for the poor being built, and for that purpose the poor colliers gave generously according to their means. Whitefield collected other sums on two or three occasions, and then left the rest to Wesley, who for many months, wherever he went, begged subscriptions for the colliers' school.

Meantime the rooms in which the societies met in Bristol were too small and unsafe for the purpose; it was determined therefore to build a meeting-house, for the use of the members and as many of their friends as they could induce to attend. A piece of ground was obtained in the Horse Fair, and there, on the 12th of May 1739, "the first stone" of the first Methodist preaching-house "was laid with the voice of praise and thanksgiving." Wesley did not intend to be personally engaged either in the direction or expense of the work, for the property had been settled upon eleven trustees, and he imagined the responsibility would be theirs. But he soon found the work would stand still if he did not pay all the workmen; and before very long he found himself burdened with a debt of more than a hundred and fifty pounds, whilst the subscriptions of the Bristol societies did not amount to one-fourth of that sum. Whitefield and Wesley's other London friends at the same time declared that they would not contribute towards the building unless he discharged the trustees, and

did everything in his own name; otherwise, they argued, the trustees would always have the power to turn him out of the room, unless he preached according to their liking. Wesley therefore undertook the whole trust as well as the whole management himself. "Money," said he, "it is true I had not, nor any human prospect or probability of procuring it; but I knew the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and in His name set out, nothing doubting."

Eventually the Methodists at Bristol, knowing that the building was for their use, very properly regarded the debt as a public one; and when they were consulting with Wesley how it should be paid, one of them suggested that every Methodist should contribute a penny a week towards it.

Some one else observed that many were poor and could not afford it.

"Then," said the proposer, "put eleven of the poorest with me, and if they can give anything, well; I will call on them weekly, and, if they can give nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you call upon eleven of your neighbours, receive what they give, and make up what is wanting."

This was the origin of the Methodists' class-money, and the same accident also led to a perfect system of inspection. For it was soon found that the collectors of the class-money could easily perceive any irregularities in the lives of those from whom they collected pence, so Wesley desired that each should look after the behaviour of those under their care, and in this way "many disorderly walkers were detected," and "some turned from the evil of their ways," or, failing that, turned out of the society.

A little later Wesley called together some of his leading disciples in London, explained to them what was being done at Bristol, and the advantages of such a thorough system of inspection, with the result that they agreed to work upon the same plan. After that, whenever a society of Methodists was

formed, this arrangement was followed—a scheme for which Wesley said he could never sufficiently praise God, its unspeakable usefulness having ever since been more and more manifest.

By-and-by it was found that visiting every member in his own home every week entailed too much labour, or was inconvenient, many members living in the houses of others as servants, etc., so then it was determined that every class should meet weekly. Advice or reproof was then given, misunderstandings were removed, and the meeting ended with prayer and singing. This too was the origin of the Methodists' class-meetings.

Whilst Wesley was in London, towards the close of 1739, two gentlemen unknown to him came again and again to urge him to preach in a place called the Foundry, near Moorfields. This was a large ruined edifice which had been used by the Government in casting cannon, till in 1716 a terrible explosion blew off the roof and injured and killed several of the workmen. The place was then abandoned, for the royal foundry was removed to Woolwich.

With much reluctance Wesley consented to preach there; and he writes in his Journal: "Sunday, November 11th, I preached at eight to five or six thousand on the spirit of bondage and the spirit of adoption; and at five in the evening to seven or eight thousand in the place which had been the King's foundry for cannon."

He was then pressed to take the place into his own hands, and did so. The purchase-money was £115;[1] but a large additional sum had to be expended in needful repairs, in building galleries, etc. Many friends subscribed, and in three years raised the sum of £480, leaving a balance of £300, for which Wesley was responsible.

This was the first Methodist meeting-house of which the metropolis could boast. Over the band-room, where the classes met and early services were conducted and prayer-

[1] Tyerman.

meetings held, there were apartments for Wesley, and in one of these his mother lived during the latter part of her life. The Foundry was really the cradle of London Methodism. Here Wesley began to preach at the end of 1739. Tyerman says: "The character of the services held in this rotten, pantile-covered building may be learnt from Wesley's works. Wesley began the service with a short prayer, then sung a hymn and preached (usually about half-an-hour), then sung a few verses of another hymn, and concluded with a prayer. His constant theme was, salvation by faith, preceded by repentance and followed by holiness. The place was rough and the people poor; but the service simple, scriptural, beautiful. No wonder that such a priest, shut out of the elaborately-wrought pulpits of the Established Church, and now cooped up within a pulpit made of '*rough* deal boards,' should be powerful, popular, and triumphant."

When Wesley left the Moravians, the eighteen who followed him out of the room at Fetter Lane, in response to his appeal, "Let him that is of the same judgment, follow me," joined the Methodists at the Foundry, and became very pious and useful members.

In the summer of 1739 Wesley received a letter from a zealous Calvinist charging him with not preaching the gospel, because he never touched upon the doctrine of Predestination. The letter had an exactly opposite effect to what was intended by the writer: Wesley began to think it was a positive duty to preach *against* the doctrine which he abhorred. Upon trying to decide about this matter in his usual way, he drew a lot which told him to "preach and print." He accordingly preached a sermon against Predestination, which he proceeded to publish, and then sent a copy of it to Georgia, where it fell into Whitefield's hands. Now Whitefield held the Calvinist doctrines, and was grieved that Wesley, with whom he had hitherto worked so harmoniously, should publicly oppose an opinion which he believed to be agreeable to the will of God.

He had one of the kindest hearts in the world, but his logical faculties were small. When he read the Calvinistic theory, he was not conversant with the arguments against it, and impulsively adopted a creed which far more powerful minds than his had not been able to defend. Perhaps he never quite understood the whole of the Calvinistic doctrine; indeed, he owned that he had not read any of Calvin's works. Wesley, in his sermon, drew up, as usual, a clear and logical statement of what he believed were their views.

The following outline of the sermon and its teaching, given by Tyerman, is most interesting, and we therefore insert it here:—

"Wesley's sermon, entitled 'Free Grace,' was founded upon Romans viii. 32, and was printed as a 12mo pamphlet in twenty-four pages. Annexed to it was Charles Wesley's remarkable hymn on 'Universal Redemption,' consisting of thirty-six stanzas of four lines each. It is also a noteworthy fact, that, notwithstanding its importance, it was never included by Wesley in any collected edition of his sermons; and, in his own edition of his works, it is placed among its controversial writings. There is likewise a brief address to the reader, as follows:—

"'Nothing but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is "the truth as it is in Jesus," but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world, could have induced me openly to oppose the sentiments of those whom I esteem for their work's sake, at whose feet may I be found in the day of the Lord Jesus!

"'Should any believe it his duty to reply hereto, I have only one request to make,—let whatsoever you do be done in charity, love, and in the spirit of meekness. Let your very disputing show that you have "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, gentleness, long-suffering," that even according to this time it may be said, "See how these Christians love one another."'

"Having laid down the principle that God's 'free grace is free in all, and free for all,' Wesley proceeds, with great acuteness, to define the doctrine of Predestination; namely, 'Free grace in all is not free for all, but only for those whom God hath ordained to life. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and therefore, before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this He absolutely decreed because it was His sovereign will. Accordingly they are born for this, to be destroyed body and soul in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption; for what grace God gives, He gives only for this, to increase, not prevent their damnation.'

"Having effectually answered the objections of well-meaning people, who, startled at a doctrine so spectral, say, 'This is not the Predestination which I hold; I hold only the election of grace,' he sums up as follows:—

"'Though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing; and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your account of it, amounts to neither more nor less than what others call "God's decree of reprobation." Call it therefore by whatever name you please, "election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation," it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this,—by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of GOD, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved.

"'This presents the doctrine in all its naked, hideous deformity; but it is fair, and no Calvinian dexterity can make it otherwise.'"

After stating the objections against this doctrine, Wesley said—"Here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every asserter of it. You represent God as worse than the devil. But you say you will prove it by Scripture. Hold! what will

you prove by Scripture? that God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this; whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask 'What is its true meaning then?' If I say, 'I know not,' you have gained nothing; for there are many Scriptures the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense at all, than to say it had such a sense as this.'"

Whitefield, having read the sermon, wrote to Charles Wesley expostulating with him and his brother on the subject. He was then returning to England, and he had had some controversy by letter with Wesley about the same thing. He wrote:—

"My dear, dear Brethren,—Why did you throw out the bone of contention? Why did you print that sermon against predestination? Why did you in particular, my dear Charles, affix your hymn and join in putting out your late hymn-book? How can you say you will not dispute with me about election, and yet print such hymns, and your brother send his sermon over, against election, to Mr. Gorden and others in America? Do not you think, my dear brethren, I must be as much concerned for the truth, or what I think truth, as you? God is my judge, I always was, and I hope I always shall be, desirous that you may be preferred before me. But I must preach the gospel of Christ, and that I cannot *now* do without speaking of election." He then tells Charles that he had written an answer to his brother's sermon, which was being printed in America—to which communication Charles made answer by telling him he was to put up again his sword within its sheath. Poor Whitefield, however, was in deep distress; he ended his letter by saying, "Oh, my dear brethren, my heart almost bleeds within me! Methinks I could be willing to tarry here on the waters for ever, rather than come to England to oppose you."

Whitefield indeed seems to have taken pen in hand to write against Wesley with great regret; he protested that Jonah could not go with more reluctance against Nineveh. "Was Nature to speak," said he, "I had rather die than do it; and yet, if I am faithful to God, and to my own and others' souls, I must not stand neuter any longer." In this letter Whitefield related how Wesley had preached and printed his obnoxious sermon in consequence of drawing a lot. "I have often questioned," said he, "whether in so doing you did not tempt the Lord. A due exercise of religious prudence, without a lot, would have directed you in that matter. But I fear, taking it for granted it was not, you only inquired whether you should be silent or preach and print against it. I was apt to think one reason why God should so suffer you to be deceived was, that hereby a special obligation might be laid upon me faithfully to declare the Scripture doctrine of election, that thus the Lord might give me a fresh opportunity of seeing what was in my heart, and whether I would be true to His cause or not."

The argumentative part of this letter had nothing worthy of notice either in manner or matter, for, though such a powerful preacher, Whitefield had neither strength nor acuteness of intellect,[1] and his written compositions are nearly worthless. But the conclusion is remarkable for the warmth of affection it breathes.

"Dear, dear sir, oh! be not offended. For Christ's sake, be not rash! Give yourself to reading. Study the covenant of grace. Down with your carnal reasonings! Be a little child; and then, instead of pawning your salvation, as you have done in a late hymn-book, if the doctrine of universal redemption be not true; instead of talking of sinless perfection, as you have done in the preface to that hymn-book, and making man's salvation to depend on his own free will, as you have done in this sermon, you will compose a hymn in praise of

[1] Southey.

sovereign distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this and call it, *Free Grace indeed;* free, because not free to all; but free, because God may withhold or give it to whom and when He pleases. Till you do this, I must doubt whether or not you know yourself. God knows my heart; nothing but a signal regard for the honour of Christ has forced this letter from me. I love and honour you for His sake; and when I come to judgment, will thank you before men and angels for what you have under God done for my soul. There I am persuaded I shall see dear Mr. Wesley convinced of election and everlasting love."

Southey says:—"That this letter was intended for publication is certain; but there seems to have been a hope in Whitefield's mind that the effect which its perusal would produce might render publication needless. His friends in London, however, thought proper to print it, without either his permission or Wesley's, and copies were distributed at the door of the Foundry, and in the meeting itself. Wesley, holding one in his hand, stated to the congregation its surreptitious publication, and then saying, 'I will do just what I believe Mr. Whitefield would were he here himself,' he tore it in pieces. Every person present followed his example; and Wesley, in reference to the person by whose means these unlucky copies had been circulated, exclaims in his Journal, 'Ah! poor Ahitophel! Ibi omnis effusus labor!'"

The person who seems to have been most active at that time in enforcing Calvinism in opposition to Wesley was a man named John Cennick, whom Wesley employed in the school at Kingswood. He was the son of Quakers, who had taught him to pray from infancy; but he grew up and developed unsteady habits, so that when the time came for him to be bound apprentice to a trade, he went nine times from Reading to London for that purpose, but no one would accept his

services. However, in 1735, he was convinced of sin, and at once left off his "song-singing, card-playing, and attending theatres," and began to lead the life of an ascetic, fasting much, and praying often, until at last, in 1737, "he found peace with God," and went on his way rejoicing. He began to write hymns, a number of which Charles Wesley corrected for the press. On his arrival at Kingswood, for the purpose of undertaking his duties in the school there, he found Wesley had gone to London, but was invited to go to Kingswood to hear a young man (probably Maxfield) read a sermon to the colliers. The young reader, however, did not arrive, and Cennick was asked to take his place, which he did with some reluctance, and preached a sermon of which he says himself, "The Lord bore witness with my words, insomuch that many believed in that hour." After that he preached again and again, and Wesley, on his arrival, finding his work useful, encouraged him to proceed.[1] But Cennick's views were Calvinistic, and when he found Wesley was preaching and publishing *against* the doctrine, he wrote a wild, urgent letter to Whitefield, imploring him to return from America, "that he might stay the plague." "I sit," said Cennick, "solitary, like Eli, wondering what will become of the ark; and while I wail and fear the carrying of it away from among my people, my trouble increases daily. How gloriously did the Gospel seem once to flourish in Kingswood! I spake of the everlasting love of Christ with sweet power. But now Brother Charles is suffered to open his mouth against this truth while the frighted sheep gaze and fly, as if no shepherd were among them. It is just as if Satan were now making war with the saints in a more than common way. Oh, pray for the distressed lambs yet left in this place that they faint not! Surely they would if preaching would do it, for they have nothing whereon to rest, who now attend on the sermons, but their own faithfulness. With Universal Redemption, Brother Charles pleases the world. Brother John follows him in every-

[1] See next chapter about lay-preaching.

thing. I believe no atheist can more preach predestination than they" (the idea of an atheist preaching predestination!); "and all who believe election are counted enemies to God, and called so. Fly, dear brother! I am as alone—I am in the midst of the plague!"

It was very painful to Wesley when a copy of this letter came into his hand, and he saw who was the traitor within the camp. "One," says he, "I had sent for to assist me, a friend that was as my own soul, that even while he opposed me lay in my bosom."

Charles Wesley wrote a very stern letter of reproof to Cennick; but Wesley thought that as matters had by that time proceeded so far that Cennick was already forming a separate society, it would be better for him to speak to him and his adherents publicly. He therefore did so, reproving them for inveighing against him behind his back. One of them replied that they had said no more of him behind his back than they would say before his face, which was that he preached false doctrine, for he preached that there was righteousness in man.

"Sir," said Wesley, "there is, after the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him through faith. But who told you that what we preached was false doctrine? Whom would you have believed this from but Mr. Cennick?"

"You *do* preach righteousness in man," said Cennick, boldly. "I did say this, and I say it still. However, we are willing to join you; but we will also meet apart from you, for we meet to confirm one another in those truths which you speak against."

"You should have told me this before," replied Wesley; "and not have supplanted me in my own house, stealing the hearts of the people, and by private accusations separating very friends."

Upon this Cennick denied having ever privately accused him.

"My brethren," said Wesley, "judge!" and he produced Cennick's letter to Whitefield.

Cennick owned that he had written the letter, and said that he neither blamed himself for doing so or retracted anything that he had said. Some heat manifested itself then, and Wesley, with his usual prudence, adjourned the meeting.

Wesley made use of the adjournment to collect witnesses who could prove that much evil had been spoken against the preaching of himself and his brother; and he read a statement of this, which ended with saying that all those persons who had been proved guilty of this and of tale-bearing, lying, dissembling, and slandering, should be dismissed from the society.

The members who had come prepared to combat his opinions thus found themselves summarily dismissed. As soon as they had recovered from their surprise, however, they declared they had heard him and his brother preach Popery many times; still, in spite of that, they said they were willing to stay with them, but they would not own they were wrong. Wesley gave them a week to consider about it, and they then offered to break up their society, provided that Cennick should be received and employed as before.

"My brother has wronged me much," said Wesley, "but he doth not say I repent."

"Unless in not speaking in your defence, I do not know that I have wronged you at all," answered Cennick.

"It seems, then," said Wesley, "nothing remains but for each to choose which society he pleases."

After prayer for the last time together, Cennick withdrew, and about half the meeting followed him.

Then Whitefield returned, anticipating, it seems, the separation between him and the Wesleys which was now so imminent, for, notwithstanding the affection evinced in his letter to Charles Wesley, he had written to other friends on the voyage home:—

"Great perils await me; but Jesus Christ will send His angel, and roll away every stone of difficulty." "My Lord's command now, I believe, is, 'Take the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.' Help me by your prayers. I have sought the Lord by prayer and fasting, and He assures me that He will be with me; whom then shall I fear?" "The Lord is girding me for the battle, and strengthening me mightily in the inner man."

It is always sad when good men are led into controversies; it was doubly so when the Wesleys and Whitefield, having worked so hard together for the salvation of souls, found themselves on opposing sides, for they stood comparatively alone, whilst their brother clergymen were afar off—regarding them either with looks of scorn or timid wonder—and now discord and strife had come between them!

Whitefield reached London and saw Charles Wesley. "It would have melted any heart," says the former, "to have heard us weeping after prayer, that, if possible, the breach might be prevented."

Whitefield promised Charles that he would never preach against him and his brother, whatever his private feelings might be. But many things made him feel bitter at this time. He had written intemperately and injudiciously (as he afterwards acknowledged) against Archbishop Tillotson's works, and the latter's *Whole Duty of Man* happened to have unrivalled popularity.

Altogether, Whitefield's celebrity seemed to have passed away; the twenty thousand who used to assemble at his preaching had dwindled down to two or three hundred; and on one occasion on Kennington Common, where he had formerly preached to such multitudes, scarcely a hundred gathered together to hear him. He called it truly a trying time.

"Many, very many, of my spiritual children," said he, "who at my last departure from England would have plucked out

their own eyes to have given me, are so prejudiced by the dear Messrs. Wesley dressing up the doctrine of election in such horrible colours, that they will neither hear, see, nor give me the least assistance; yea, some of them send threatening letters that God will speedily destroy me."

This folly, says Southey, on the part of Wesley's hot adherents, irritated him, and that irritation was fomented by his own. Thus it was that when Wesley, having been sent for by Charles, went to him to see if the breach might yet be closed, Whitefield frankly told him that they preached two different Gospels, and therefore he not only would not join with him, or give him the right hand of fellowship, but would publicly preach against him "wheresoever he preached at all," alleging that his former promise was "an effect of weakness," and he was now of another mind.

This temper caused him, presently, to write somewhat sharply to Wesley about things which he thought had been mismanaged during his absence in America, to which Wesley replied kindly and temperately—

"Would you have me deal plainly with you, my brother? I believe you would; then, by the grace of God, I will. Of many things I find you are not rightly informed; of others you speak what you have not well weighed. The society-room at Bristol, you say, is adorned. How? Why, with a piece of green cloth nailed to the desk; two sconces for eight candles each in the middle; and—nay, I know no more. Now, which of these can be spared I know not; nor would I desire either more adorning or less. But lodgings are made for me or my brother. That is, in plain English, there is a little room by the school, where I speak to the persons who come to me; and a garret in which a bed is placed for me. And do you grudge me this? Is this the voice of my brother, my son Whitefield?"[1] Another and a heavier charge was, that he had perverted Whitefield's design for the poor colliers; and this

[1] Southey.

was answered by a plain statement of the matter, which must have made Whitefield blush for the hasty and ungenerous accusation.

"But it is a hard case," said Wesley, "that you and I should be talking thus! Indeed these things ought not to be. It lay in your power to have prevented all, and yet to have borne testimony to what you call the truth. If you had disliked my sermon, you might have printed another on the same text, and have answered my proofs without mentioning my name.[1] This had been fair or friendly. You rank all the maintainers of Universal Redemption with Socinians themselves. Alas! my brother, do you not know even this, that the Socinians allow no redemption at all? That Socinus himself speaks thus—*Tota redemptio nostra per Christum metaphora;* and says expressly Christ did not die as a ransom for any, but only as an example for all mankind? How easy were it for me to hit many other palpable blots in that which you call an answer to my sermon! And how above measure contemptible would you then appear to all impartial men, either of sense or learning! But I spare you! mine hand shall not be upon you: the Lord be judge between thee and me. The general tenor both of my public and private exhortations, when I touch thereon at all, as even my enemies, if they would testify, is, 'Spare the young man, even Absalom, for my sake!'"

At the end of 1741 the evangelical party in England was thus split up into three divisions. In the first place, there was that headed by Wesley, and soon known as Wesley's or Wesleyan Methodists; and, secondly, the "United Brethren," or Moravians, who were in sympathy with mystical religion, and disliked the violent display of emotions made by the early Methodists. And then there was the party—soon a large one—which gathered round Whitefield, and clung to the doctrine of

[1] Whitefield had preached against Wesley's teaching, mentioning him by name.

Predestination or Election, and, we must add, considered that a *vital* point; for there was nothing in the mere belief to exclude them from Wesley's society.

Soon after Whitefield had separated from Wesley, some Calvinistic Dissenters built a large shed for him near the Foundry, upon a piece of ground which was lent for the purpose, till he should return to America. This edifice was called a Tabernacle, because of its temporary nature, and in allusion to the movable place of worship of the Israelites of old; and from that the name became the designation of all the Calvinistic Methodist Chapels. But Whitefield had not any ambition of founding a separate religious community, and neither had he the requisite talent; he would have been content with being the founder of the Orphan House at Savannah, and with his work as an itinerant preacher; and Calvinistic Methodism would never have been embodied in a separate sect, if it had not found a patroness in Selina, Countess of Huntingdon.

This "noble and elect lady," as her followers called her, was the widow of Theophilus, Earl of Huntingdon. The Wesleys had been called in to see her after a dangerous illness, which had led to her conversion; and, says Southey, her husband's tutor, Bishop Benson, was sent for afterwards in hopes that he might "bring her to a saner sense of devotion." However, the lady, being more disposed to teach than learn, quoted the Homilies to him, insisted upon her own interpretation of the Articles, and spoke to him of the awful responsibility of his position. The Bishop is said to have expressed his regret, as he took his leave, that he had ever laid hands on George Whitefield.

"My lord," replied the Countess, "mark my words! when you come upon your dying bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacence."[1]

During her husband's lifetime the Countess yielded to his

[1] The Bishop on his death-bed sent Whitefield a present of ten guineas, and asked an interest in his prayers.—ABEL STEVENS.

COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON.

wishes so far as to restrain herself from taking an active and public part in the Methodist movement, but, after his death, finding herself the owner of a liberal income, she devoted it and her life to the cause of the Methodists. Her Calvinistic opinions and other reasons caused her to patronise Whitefield when he separated from Wesley; and then her talents, wealth, and influence placed her at the head of his party. She endeavoured to reconcile Wesley and Whitefield, with the result that Whitefield preached in Wesley's chapel, Wesley reading prayers, and Wesley officiated at the tabernacle, assisted by Whitefield.

Perhaps it might be as well to mention here that during her lifetime this noble lady gave away for religious purposes more than a hundred thousand pounds. She sold all her jewels that she might build chapels for the poor, giving up, also, for the cause she had so much at heart, her carriage, her expensive residences, and liveried servants; she purchased theatres, halls, dilapidated chapels, too, in London, Bristol, and Dublin, and fitted them up for public worship. At her Chelsea mansion Whitefield preached to men of high rank and great talents. Romaine, Venn, Madan, Berridge, Toplady, Shirley, Fletcher, Benson, and a host of others shared the beneficent labours of the Countess. She met them in frequent conferences, travelled about the kingdom, accompanied by other pious ladies and evangelists, who preached wherever they went, and finally was the means of establishing a theological college in Wales for the preparation of ministers, presumably of her own way of thinking.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LAY-PREACHING.

WESLEY had at this time cause for serious apprehension that a worse separation than that from Whitefield was impending. The Moravians had now disowned some of those errors which Molther had introduced into their midst, and which had led to Wesley's leaving them, and Charles Wesley was inclined to take their side, and even went so far as to declare it was not his intention to preach again at the Foundry.

"The Philistines are upon thee, Samson," says Wesley in his Journal on this occasion, "but the Lord is not *departed from thee.* He shall strengthen thee yet again."

Writing to Charles, he says—"Oh, my brother, my soul is grieved for you! the poison is in you; fair words have stolen away your heart. No English man or woman is like the Moravians! So the matter is come to a fair issue. Five of us did still stand together a few months since, but two are gone to the right hand (Hutchins and Cennick), and two more to the left (Mr. Hall and you). Lord, if it be Thy Gospel which I preach, arise and maintain Thine own cause."

Charles, however, now yielded to his brother's opinions, and once more the old love and confidence between them was re-established.

About that time Wesley made a preaching tour in the Midland counties. Ingham had been that way preaching with great success, and there too Mr. Simpson, one of the Oxford Methodists, had settled as a sort of Moravian minister. On reaching Ockbrook, where Simpson lived, Wesley found that, though a few months before there had been a great

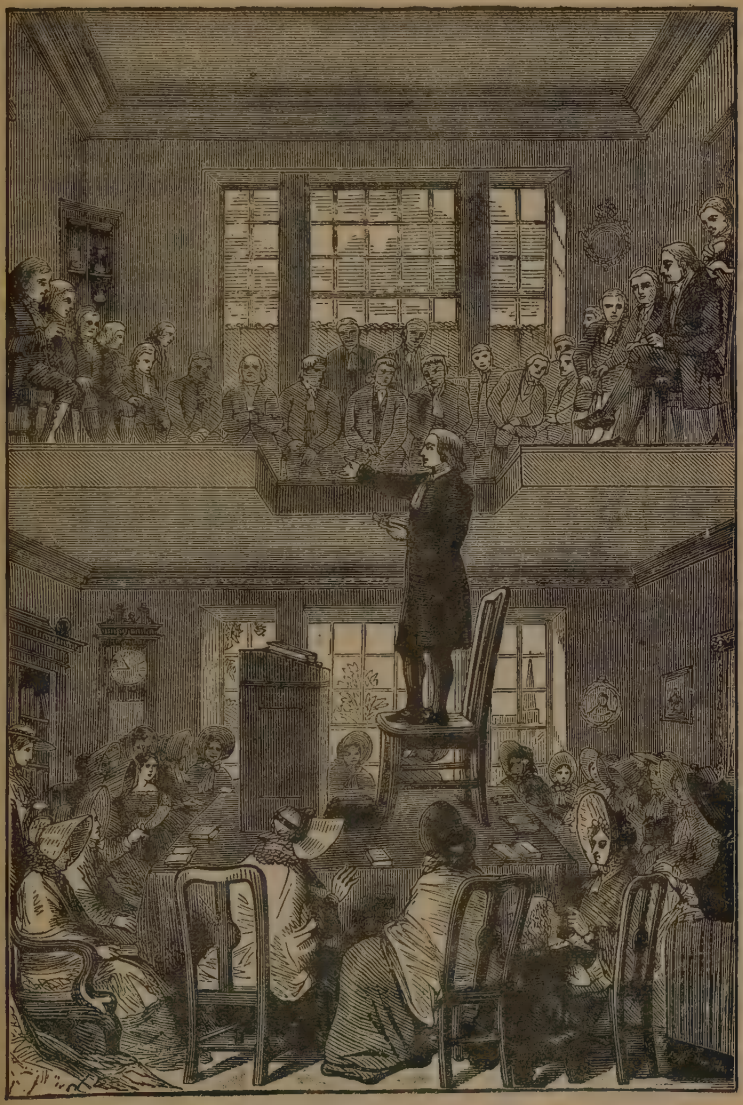
awakening all round about, three-fourths of the converts were now backsliders. Simpson had drawn the people from the Church, and had advised them to abandon devotion. He said there was no Church of England left, and that there was no Scriptural command for family or private prayer. "If you wish to believe, be still," he said, "and leave off what you call the means of grace, such as prayer and running to church and sacrament."[1] Mr. Graves, the clergyman of the parish, wisely offered the use of his church to Wesley, who preached two sermons, one on "the true Gospel stillness," and the other from his favourite text—"By grace are ye saved, through faith."

Wesley next went on to Nottingham, where he found further proofs of backsliding. There the Methodists held their meetings in the house of Matthew Bagshaw, "who, to accommodate the people, fixed in the floor of his chamber a large trap door, which, when lifted up, converted Matthew's dormitory into a sort of gallery; and the preacher, standing in the aperture, with his head just through the floor, was thus enabled to preach to the female part of his congregation in the room below, and at the same time to the men occupying the room above."

Now, however, the rooms, which used to be crowded, were half empty, and the few who came behaved most irreverently. Wesley preached twice to them, and once in the market-place to an immense multitude.

But we must now mention Wesley's first lay-preachers. One of the matters that had been disputed about in Fetter Lane before the breach with the Moravians was as to the expediency of lay-preaching. A layman named Shaw insisted that a priesthood was an unnecessary and unscriptural institution, and that he himself had as good a right to preach, baptise, and administer the sacraments as any other man. Of course such a teacher found ready believers, but Charles

[1] Tyerman.



JOHN WESLEY PREACHING IN MATTHEW BAGSHAW'S HOUSE.

Wesley strenuously opposed these "pestilent errors." A certain Mr. Bowers set the first example of lay-preaching, but afterwards acknowledged he had erred, and became reconciled to Charles. The latter was supported in these disputes by Whitefield and his friend Howell Harris, a young and ardent Welshman, who was the first promoter of Methodism in his own country.

Tyerman says all Methodist historians have assumed that Maxfield was Methodism's first lay-preacher—*i.e.*, the first that was allowed to expound the Scriptures without being formally ordained—but this is a mistake, for he was not converted till May 1739, and a month before that John Cennick was employed with Wesley's sanction at Kingswood. Howell Harris had preached in his own country, and had crossed the Channel to find "wider doors of usefulness than ever." Then Thomas Maxfield desired to help in the work, and Wesley set him over the society in London, letting him expound and no doubt read sermons there.

The official biographers say that the young man Maxfield, "being fervent in spirit, and mighty in the Scriptures, greatly profited the people. They crowded to hear him; and by the increase of their number, as well as by their earnest and deep attention, they insensibly led him to go further than he had at first designed. He began to *preach;* and the Lord so blessed the word that many were not only deeply awakened and brought to repentance, but were also made happy in a consciousness of pardon. The Scripture marks of true conversion, inward peace, and power to walk in all holiness evinced the work to be of God."

Yet still the preaching was represented to Wesley as an irregularity which it required his presence to put a stop to, and he hastened to London to do so.[1]

His mother was living in his apartments at the Foundry, and she asked him why he looked displeased when he entered.

[1] Southey.

"Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher I find," he replied.

"John," said Mrs. Wesley, "you know what my sentiments have been; you cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind; but take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself."

Wesley, says Southey, like Loyola, was always ready to correct any part of his conduct or system as soon as he discovered that it was inconvenient or erroneous. He was too wise a man to be obstinate, and too sincere in all his actions to feel any reluctance at acknowledging that he had been mistaken. He heard Maxfield preach, and then said, in the words of one of old, "*It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.*"

Seeing it was impossible to prevent his followers from preaching, he tried to direct the stream he could not turn, and from that time admitted volunteers whom he approved of as "sons in the Gospel," but always upon the condition that they should labour where he appointed.

"I knew your brother well," said Robinson, the Archbishop of Armagh, when he met Charles Wesley in Bristol; "I knew your brother well. I could never credit all I heard respecting him and you; but one thing in your conduct I could never account for, your employing laymen."

"My Lord," said Charles, "the fault is yours and your brethren's."

"How so?" asked the Archbishop.

"Because you hold your peace, and the stones cry out."

"But I am told," continued the Primate, "that they are unlearned men."

"Some are," said the poet-preacher, "and so the dumb ass rebukes the prophet."

If Wesley's determination had not been occasioned by Maxfield's conduct, it would have been brought about by the

service of another labourer, named John Nelson, a Yorkshire mason. This man, the son of a pious father, married early and happily, was prosperous in business, and in worldly matters doing well, when he was visited, at the age of thirty, with a sense of the unworthiness of his life and the fear of judgment, and also with such a yearning hope of something better, that he could take no rest. He wandered up and down in the fields after his day's work was done, thinking what he should do to be saved; he went from church to church, but found no consolation. In one he heard a clergyman expatiate upon the comfort good men derive in death from the retrospect of a well-spent life, which, he says, thinking of the failure his own had been, "was a stab" to his "wounded soul." In another church he heard it affirmed that man had no right to expect an interest in the merits of Christ if he had not fulfilled his part and done *all* that lay in his power, which made him think that none but little children could be saved. He next went to hear Dissenters of different denominations, but to no purpose. He tried Roman Catholics, but soon had enough of their way of worship. He attended the Quakers' meetings, but with no better success. "I had now," he said, "tried all but the Jews, and I thought it was to no purpose to go to them." So he resolved to keep to the Church, and read and pray, whether he perished or not.

He next went to hear Whitefield preach in Moorfields, but Whitefield did not touch the right chord in his heart.

"He was to me," says Nelson, "as a man that could play well on an instrument; for his preaching was pleasant to me, and I loved the man, so that if any one offered to disturb him, I was ready to fight for him, but I did not understand him."

Then Wesley preached for the first time in Moorfields.

"Oh!" says Nelson, "that was a blessed morning for my soul! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair, and turned his face towards where I stood, and I thought

he fixed his eyes on me. His countenance struck such an awful dread upon me before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me."

Nelson might well think thus, says Southey, for it was a peculiar characteristic of Wesley in his discourses, that, in winding up sermons, in pointing his exhortations and driving them home, he spoke as if he were addressing himself to an individual, so that every one to whom the condition which he described was applicable, felt as if he were singled out; and the preacher's words were then like the eyes of a portrait which seem to look at every beholder.

"Who," said the preacher, "who art thou that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness? Thou art the man! I want thee for my Lord; I challenge *thee* for a child of God by faith. The Lord hath need of *thee.* Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance His glory,—the glory of His free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. Oh! come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus; and *thou*, even *thou*, art reconciled to God."

As Wesley spoke in this manner, the chord vibrated now in the heart which Whitefield had failed to touch, and when the sermon was over, John Nelson said to himself, "This man can tell the secrets of my heart. He hath not left me there, for he hath shown the remedy, even the blood of Jesus."

Nelson did not at that time make his case known to Wesley, but went to hear him again and again, and felt so zealously for the salvation of souls that he actually hired another man to go and hear him. The other man went, and said it was the best thing for his soul any one had ever done him. Nelson lived now so strict a life that he had to encounter no little persecution. After a little time, he had an opportunity of speaking to Wesley; they walked a little way together, and Nelson said it was a blessed conference for him. When they parted, Wesley

took him by the hand, and, looking him in the face, bade him take care that he did not quench the Spirit.

Nelson now went to Bristol, his native place, to rejoin his family; and there, much to his wife's distress, he began reproving and exhorting the neighbours, and, to defend his doctrine, acquired the habit of quoting texts of Scripture, expounding and enforcing them. This he did in his own house at first, until he had converted most of his relations; and when his audience became so large that the house would not hold them, he stood at the door and harangued there. Ingham was settled in this neighbourhood with a Moravian society, and he, at Peter Böhler's desire, gave John Nelson leave to exhort them, though this permission was withdrawn after the separation of the Methodists from the Moravians in London. However, John would not then be silenced; he said he had not begun at the order of man, and would not leave off by it. Hitherto, his "sobriety of character" had caused him to have strong conflicts with a natural reluctance to preach, and perhaps a diffidence of himself. On one occasion, Jonah-like, when a great congregation was gathered together begging him to preach, he fled into the fields. But now opposition stimulated his zeal, and indignation made him eloquent. He wrote to Wesley, telling him what he was doing, and requesting him, "as his father in the Gospel," to write and give him some instructions how to proceed in the work which God had begun by such an unpolished tool as himself.

Wesley replied that he would see him in the ensuing week, and accordingly came to Bristol and found a preacher and a congregation raised up without his interference.[1] Had he been still doubtful whether the admission of lay-preachers should make a part of his plan, this must have decided him. "Therefore," say his official biographers, "he now fully acquiesced in the order of God, and rejoiced that the thoughts of God were not as his confused thoughts."

[1] Southey.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WESLEY VISITS NEWCASTLE AND EPWORTH.

LEAVING Nelson, with full confidence in his steadfast discretion and further success, Wesley hastened to Newcastle, then one of those degraded mining regions which Methodism proposed to invade.

On going out into the town the same evening on which he arrived—Thursday, 17th May 1742—he was surprised at the wickedness which abounded.

"So much drunkenness, cursing and swearing," he says in his Journal, "(even from the mouths of little children), do I never remember to have seen and heard before, in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

At seven o'clock on Sunday morning, Wesley walked down to Sandgate, the poorest and most degraded part of the town, and, standing at the end of the street with a religious friend, began to sing the hundredth psalm.

"Three or four people," he says, "came out to see what was the matter, who soon increased to four or five hundred. I suppose there might be twelve or fifteen hundred before I had done preaching, to whom I applied these solemn words, 'He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed.'

"Observing the people, when I had done, to stand gaping and staring upon me with the most profound astonishment, I told them, 'If you desire to know who I am, my name is John

Wesley; at five[1] in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again.'

"At five, the hill on which I designed to preach was covered from the top to the bottom. I never saw so large a number of people together, either at Moorfields or Kennington Common. I knew it was not possible for the one-half to hear, although my voice was then strong and clear, and I stood so as to have them all in view, as they were ranged on the side of the hill. The word of God which I set before them was, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' After preaching, the poor people were ready to trample me under foot, out of pure love and kindness. I was some time before I could possibly get out of the press. I then went back another way than I came. But several were got to our inn before me; by whom I was vehemently importuned to stay with them, at least a few days, or, however, one day more. But I could not consent, having given my word to be at Bristol, with God's leave, on Tuesday night.

"Some of these told me 'they were members of a religious society, which had subsisted for many years, and had always gone on in a prudent, regular manner, and had been well spoken of by all men. They likewise informed me what a fine library they had, and that the steward read a sermon every Sunday.' And yet how many of the publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of Heaven before these!"

It must have been hard for Wesley to leave these poor people, some of whom were so hungering for the Bread of Life, and others so wrapped up in self-satisfaction, and yet desirous to hear more from him. Before very long his brother came among them for a short time, and before the year closed Wesley returned himself. On his second visit, he saw their degradation more completely than before; he wrote that he had got into the very Kingswood of the north. Twenty or thirty wild children ran round him when he entered the

[1] Wesley was very careful not to preach in Church hours.—E. C. K.

common to preach. Their raggedness and evident destitution deeply affected him, and they looked, he says, as if they would have "swallowed him up," especially while he was applying to them the words, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins." He next began to build a room for what he called "the wild, staring, loving society." "I could not but observe," he says, "the different manner wherein God is pleased to work in different places. The grace of God flows here with a wider stream than it did at first either in Bristol or Kingswood; but it does not sink so deep as it did there. Few are thoroughly convinced of sin, and scarce any can witness that the Lamb of God has taken away their sins."

However, later, some instances of excitement and its physical effects appeared here as in other places where Wesley preached. One woman had her sight and strength taken away at once; and at the same time, she said, the love of God so overflowed her soul that she could neither speak nor move. A man also lost his sight for a time, and others began to cry out and sink down in the meetings.

"And I could not but observe," says Wesley, "that here the very *best people*, so called, were as deeply convinced as open sinners. . . . I never saw a work of God in any other place so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rises step by step. Not so much seems to be done at any one time as hath frequently been at Bristol or London, but something at every time. It is the same with particular souls. I saw none in that triumph of faith which has been so common in other places. But the believers go on calm and steady. Let God do as seemeth him good!"

There was some difficulty in obtaining a place at Newcastle whereon to build his meeting-house. "We can get no ground," said Wesley, "for love or money. I like this well. It is a good sign. If the devil can hinder us, he shall." The purchase at last was made, and the foundation

was laid of a meeting and orphan house upon a scale for the completion of which it was computed that £700 would be required.

"Many," says Wesley, "were positive it would never be finished at all, others that I should not live to see it covered. I was of another mind, nothing doubting; but, as it was begun for God's sake, He would provide what was necessary for the finishing of it."

"Wesley," says Southey, "had now meeting-houses in Bristol, London, Kingswood, and Newcastle, and societies were being rapidly formed in other places by means of an itinerancy, which was now become a regular system, and by the co-operation of lay-preachers, who sprang up daily among his followers. At this time he judged it expedient to draw up a set of general rules, and this was done with the advice and assistance of his brother. The United Society, as they now denominated it, was defined to be 'no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness; united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation.' The class rules were then laid down, as a means of more easily discerning whether the members were indeed thus employed. The only condition previously required of those who applied for admission was 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and be saved from their sins.' But it was expected that all who continued in the society should 'continue to evidence their desire of salvation, first, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind, especially that which is most generally practised: such as taking the name of God in vain; profaning the Sabbath, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying and selling; drunkenness; buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity; fighting, quarrelling, brawling; brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil, or railing for railing; using

many words in buying or selling; buying or selling unaccustomed goods; giving or taking things on usury; uncharitable or unprofitable conversation; particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers; doing to others as we would not they should do unto us; and doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as the putting on of gold or costly apparel; the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; the singing those songs or reading those books that do not tend to the knowledge or love of God; softness and needless self-indulgence; laying up treasure on earth; borrowing without a probability of paying, or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them. These were the inhibitions which the members of the society were expected to observe.'

"They were expected to evidence their desire of salvation, 'secondly, by doing good, by being in every kind merciful after their power, as they had opportunity; doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible to all men, to their bodies, of the ability that God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison; to their souls, by instructing, reproving, or exhorting all they had any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that we are not to do good unless our hearts be free to it; by doing good, especially to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business; and so much the more, because the world will love its own and them only; by all possible diligence and frugality that the Gospel might not be blamed; by running with patience the race that was set before them, *denying themselves and taking up their Cross daily;* submitting to bear the reproach of Christ,—to be as the filth and off-scouring of the world, and looking that men should *say all manner of evil of them falsely for the Lord's sake.*' They were expected also

to attend on all the ordinances of God, such as public worship, the ministry of the Word, either read or expounded; the Lord's Supper; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures, and fasting or abstinence.

"'These,' said the two brothers, 'are the general rules of our societies; all of which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written Word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know the Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them, let it be made known to them who watch over that soul, as they must give an account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season. But then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.'"

When these strict rules were laid down, Methodism had taken deep root in the land; and the one master-mind, the head of the whole system, was John Wesley. Lord Macaulay said Wesley "had a genius for ecclesiastical government not inferior to that of Richelieu," and he certainly managed the affairs of his huge society with great skill and power. We have seen how cleverly the finances were arranged, so that the increase of the members brought with it an increase of revenue; and, at the same time, the system of minute inspection of the members both tended to gratify each one by giving him a sense of his own importance, and also enabled each preacher to have an exact knowledge of those under his charge, and thus evil-disposed persons and dissemblers were as far as possible excluded from the society. The number of the lay-preachers, all appointed by Wesley, increased rapidly; and before long Wesley distributed them all over England. They were sent out two and two, and were stationed for a year at a time in their "circuit," or definite tract of country. At first the circuits were very large, but there has been a process of subdivision always going on. London and Bristol remained the

chief centres, and received a large portion of the Wesleys' personal attention. Before long, Newcastle-on-Tyne became the Methodists' next important place.[1]

After Wesley's first visit to Newcastle, he again visited Bristol, and then went on to Epworth, his old home, where he had not been for a long time; but we will quote from his Journal:—

"June 5th, Saturday.—It being many years since I had been in Epworth before, I went to an inn in the middle of the town, not knowing whether there were any left in it now who would not be ashamed of my acquaintance. But an old servant of my father's, with two or three poor women, presently found me out. I asked her, 'Do you know any in Epworth who are in earnest to be saved?' She answered, 'I am, by the grace of God; and I know I am saved through faith.'

"'Have you then the peace of God?' I asked. 'Do you know that He has forgiven your sins?'

"She replied, 'I thank God, I know it well. And many here can say the same thing.'

"Sunday, 6th.—A little before the service began I went to Mr. Romley, the curate, and offered to assist him, either by preaching or reading prayers. But he did not care to accept of my assistance. The church was exceedingly full in the afternoon, a rumour being spread that I was to preach. But the sermon on 'Quench not the Spirit' was not suitable to the expectation of many of the hearers. Mr. Romley told them one of the most dangerous ways of quenching the spirit was by enthusiasm, and enlarged on the character of an enthusiast in a very florid and oratorical manner."

To refuse to allow John Wesley to preach in his father's church was bad enough; but to use the occasion, when his late father's parishioners had crowded there to hear him preach, to expatiate against him and his doctrine was surely

[1] R. Denny Urlin.

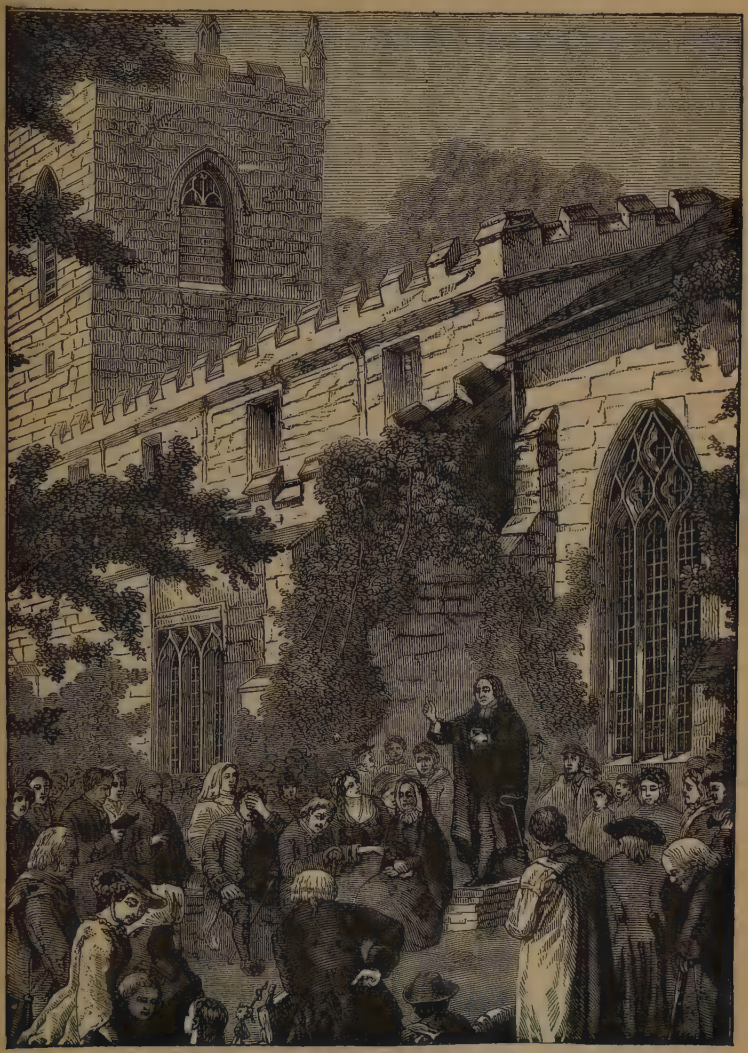
worse![1] Yet how patiently Wesley records it, and how undaunted he was in his resolution still to do the work to which he believed he was called! John Taylor, a servant of the Countess of Huntingdon, and a very religious man, was with him, and, after the sermon, he "stood in the churchyard and gave notice, as the people were coming out, 'Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock.'"

"Accordingly at six I came," says Wesley, "and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tomb-stone, and cried, 'The kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'"

Wesley remained eight days at Epworth, and every evening preached to the people from his father's tomb-stone. He must have felt deeply the associations of the place, but paused not to record his emotions; his one great work of preaching absorbed his every energy. His hearers, however, felt the power of his word and of the scene. He tells us that one evening, when he was preaching of Ezekiel's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones, "lamentation and great mourning were heard; God bowing their hearts, so that on every side, as with one accord, they lifted up their voice and wept aloud. Surely," he adds, "He who sent His spirit to breathe upon them will hear their cry and will help them."

A gentleman came to hear him, "who was remarkable for not pretending to be of any religion at all." Wesley was informed that he had not been at public worship of any kind for thirty years. The strange scene in the churchyard probably alone induced him to hear Wesley. But, however that might be, the sermon smote him to the heart, and he stood gazing upwards and looking like a statue.

[1] This man owed all he was, we are told, to the father of John Wesley, even his curacy.



WESLEY PREACHING ON HIS FATHER'S TOMB.

"Sir, are you a sinner?" asked the preacher, turning to him.

"Sinner enough!" he replied, in a deep broken voice, still staring upwards, till his wife and a servant or two, "all in tears," put him in his chaise and carried him home. Ten years later Wesley saw him,[1] and was agreeably surprised to find him strong in faith, though fast failing in body. For some years, he said, he had been rejoicing in God without either doubt or fear, and was now waiting for the welcome hour when he should depart and be with Christ.

Wesley also preached at Burnham, Ouston, Belton, Overthorpe, and Haxey, in which places religious societies had been formed; but two men, John Harrison and Richard Ridley, had poisoned them with the Moravian heresy, teaching "that all ordinances are man's inventions, and that if they went to church or sacrament they would be damned." Many people had therefore forsaken the Church, and others were doubtful what to do. The knowledge of this made Wesley decide to stay longer than he at first intended. He says quaintly—"I was now in a strait between two; desiring to hasten forward in my journey, and yet not knowing how to leave those poor bruised reeds in the confusion wherein I found them." However, as we have seen, he decided to stay eight days; upon one of these the following incident occurred.

"Wednesday, 9th.—I rode over to a neighbouring town," says Wesley, "to wait upon a Justice of Peace, a man of candour and understanding; before whom (I was informed) their angry neighbours had carried a whole waggon-load of these heretics" (Wesley's converts). "But when he asked what they had done there was a deep silence; for that was a point their conductors had forgot. At length one said, 'Why, they pretend to be better than other people. And, besides, they pray from morning to night.'

"Mr. J—— asked, 'But have they done nothing besides?'

[1] Stevens' *History of Methodism.*

"'Yes, sir,' said an old man; 'an't please your worship, they have *convarted* my wife. Till she went among them she had such a tongue—and now she is as quiet as a lamb.'

"'Carry them back, carry them back,' replied the Justice, 'and let them convert all the scolds in the town.'"

John Whitelamb, Wesley's brother-in-law, who held the living at Wroote, heard him preach at Epworth, and wrote to him, saying—

"Your presence creates an awe, as if you were an inhabitant of another world. I cannot think as you do; but I retain the highest veneration and affection for you. The sight of you moves me strangely. My heart overflows with gratitude. I cannot refrain from tears when I reflect—this is the man who at Oxford was more than a father to me; this is he whom I have there heard expound, or dispute publicly, or preach at St. Mary's with such applause. I am quite forgotten. None of the family ever honour me with a line! Have I been ungrateful? I have been passionate, fickle, a fool, but I hope I shall never be ungrateful."

On receiving this touching appeal, Wesley hastened to Wroote to visit his old friend. Mr. Whitelamb offered him his church, and he preached there in the morning on "Ask, and it shall be given you," and in the afternoon on the difference between "the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith;" but the church could not contain all the people who came, some of them from far, to hear him.

The same evening Wesley preached for the last time in Epworth churchyard to "a vast multitude, gathered together from all parts," on the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. And then "I continued among them for near three hours," says Wesley, "and yet we scarce knew how to part." Then, alluding to his father's work during a long lifetime, he exclaims, "Oh! let none think his labour of love is lost, because the fruit does not immediately appear! Near forty years did my father labour here; but he saw little fruit of all his labour. I

took some pains among this people too;[1] and my strength also seemed spent in vain. But now the fruit appeared; there were scarce any in the town, on whom either my father or I had taken any pains formerly, but the seed sown so long since now sprung up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins."

John Whitelamb, writing to Charles Wesley, said, "I had the honour and happiness of seeing and conversing with my brother John. He behaved to me truly like himself. I found in him what I have always experienced heretofore—the gentleman, the friend, the brother, and the Christian."

In the beginning of the next year Wesley visited Epworth again, and then he was treated with even rudeness and disrespect by the curate, Mr. Romley. This man,[2] as we have seen, owed his position entirely to Wesley's father, and yet his bitterness and animosity against Wesley was such, that when some persons who had come from the neighbouring towns, by Wesley's advice, notified to Mr. Romley that they intended to communicate the following Sunday, he said to them in reply, "Tell Mr. Wesley I shall not give *him* the sacrament, for he is not *fit*." This insult called forth from Wesley a strong expression of feeling in his Journal.

"How wise a God," says he, "is our God! There could not have been so *fit* a place under Heaven where *this* should befall me; first, as my father's house, the place of my nativity, and the very place where, *according to the very strictest sect of our religion*, I had so long *lived a Pharisee*. It was also *fit*, in the highest degree, that he who repelled me from that very table, where I had myself so often distributed the bread of life, should be one who owed his all in this world to the tender love which *my* father had shown to *his*, as well as personally to himself."

[1] During his two years' curacy.

[2] He is said to have been a drunkard.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PERSECUTIONS, MOBS, AND RIOTS.

WESLEY was at Bristol, soon after his first preaching visit to Epworth, when he was summoned to London to his dying mother. Charles was absent, but Mrs. Wesley's five daughters were with her. Wesley writes—"I found my mother on the borders of eternity; but she had no doubt or fear, nor any desire but to depart and be with Christ." She died of gout, on Friday, July 23. It was the third day after Wesley's arrival, and he thus writes of it in his Journal:—

"I sat down on the bedside. She was in her last conflict, unable to speak, but, I believe, quite sensible. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes fixed upward, while we commended her soul to God. From three to four the silver chord was loosing, and the wheel breaking at the cistern; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round the bed and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech: 'Children, as soon as I am released, sing a psalm of praise to God.'"

John performed the funeral service himself, and thus feelingly describes it—"Almost an innumerable company of people being gathered together, about five in the afternoon I committed to the earth the body of my mother to sleep with her fathers. The portion of Scripture from which I afterwards spoke was, '*I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written*

in the books, according to their works.' It was one of the most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see, on this side eternity."

Thus died and was buried one of the best of women, and the son, who in his early manhood had expressed the earnest desire that he might not survive his mother, stood by her grave and preached to the assembled crowd one of his most eloquent and impassioned sermons.

Mrs. Wesley had had much sorrow. During her husband's lifetime she had struggled with narrow circumstances. Of her nineteen children the greater number had died young; she had survived her best beloved Samuel, and had been left dependent upon her other sons; and she had the bitter grief of knowing that two of her daughters were miserable in their married life. But her faith triumphed over all her afflictions; she died the death of the righteous, and her last moments were full of peace.

Wesley immediately plunged again into his round of constant preaching, and at times, as ever, encountered the fierce animosity of the wicked.

On the 12th of September he writes—"I was desired to preach in an open place, commonly called the Great Gardens, lying between Whitechapel and Coverlet's Fields, where I found a vast multitude gathered together. Taking knowledge that a great part of them were little acquainted with the things of God, I called upon them in the words of our Lord, 'Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.' Many of the beasts of the people laboured much to disturb those that were of a better mind. They endeavoured to drive in a herd of cows among them; but the brutes were wiser than their masters. They then threw whole showers of stones, one of which struck me just between the eyes; but I felt no pain at all; and when I had wiped away the blood, went on testifying with a loud voice that God hath given to them that believe, 'not the spirit of fear, but power, and of love, and of a sound mind.' And by the spirit which now appeared through the whole congregation, I plainly saw

what a blessing it is when it is given us, even in the lowest degree, to suffer for His name's sake."

But Bristol, the scene of Wesley's first out-door labours, was the first place where he received any serious disturbance from the rabble. After several nights of uproar, the mob assembled in great strength. "Not only the courts and alleys," says Wesley, "but all the street, upwards and downwards, was filled with people, shouting, cursing and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage." They set the orders of the magistrates at nought, and grossly abused the chief constable, till a party of peacemakers arrived and took the ringleaders into custody. When they were brought up before the Mayor, Mr. Combe, they began to excuse themselves by reviling Wesley, but the Mayor promptly cut them short by saying, "What Mr. Wesley is, is nothing to you. I will keep the peace. I will have no rioting in this city." The effect of this determined interposition of the civil power was that the rabble at Bristol no longer disturbed the Methodists.

In London also the same protection was offered; the Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, hearing of the feeling which the mob had shown, called upon Wesley, and after telling him such things were not to be suffered, added, "Sir, I and the other Middlesex magistrates have orders from above to do you justice whenever you apply to us."

Wesley applied for this assistance when the mob stoned him and his followers in the streets and attempted to unroof the Foundry, and the disturbances were soon suppressed. At Chelsea the rioters threw wild-fire and crackers into the room where he was preaching. At Long Lane they broke in the roof with large stones, so that the people within were in danger of their lives. Wesley addressed the rabble, but to no purpose; he then sent out three or four determined men, who seized one of the ringleaders and brought him into the house, cursing and blaspheming. The wretched man was despatched to the nearest Justice, and bound over to the next sessions at Guilford.

A remarkable circumstance occurred during this scene. One of the stoutest champions of the rioters was struck with sudden contrition, and came into the room with a woman who had been as ferocious as himself—both to fall upon their knees and acknowledge the mercy of God.[1]

These disturbances were soon suppressed in London and its vicinity, but in some parts of the country the magistrates themselves instigated the people to attack the Methodists.

Wesley had preached at Wednesbury, in Staffordshire, both in the Town Hall and in the open air, without molestation; the colliers in the neighbourhood had listened peaceably, and between three or four hundred had joined themselves into a society as Methodists. The clergyman of the town was at first well pleased at this, but later he was offended by some indiscretion, and from that time began to oppose the Methodists with all his might. Some of the neighbouring magistrates assisted him in stirring up the rabble, and in refusing to act on behalf of the Methodists when their persons and property were attacked. Affairs therefore grew desperate; mobs were collected by the sound of a horn, windows were demolished, houses broken open, goods destroyed or stolen; men, women, and children beaten, pelted, and dragged about. People were nearly murdered if they would not sign a paper of recantation. When things had gone on in this way for four or five months, Wesley, who was on his way then to Newcastle, heard how it was with the poor Methodists at Wednesbury, and went there at once, for he was always ready to face danger.

He preached at mid-day in the middle of the town to a large assembly of people, without the slightest molestation from any one. But in the evening the mob beset the house where he lodged, crying fiercely, "Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!"

Without losing any of his usual calmness, Wesley desired one of his friends to take the captain of the mob and lead

[1] Southey.

him into the house. The fellow was soothed or awed by Wesley's manner and appearance, and was persuaded to bring in one or two of his more angry companions. They too were appeased, and now suffered Wesley, or assisted to make way for him, to go out and speak to the people. Wesley called for a chair, got upon it, and demanded of the crowd what they wanted of him.

"We want you to go with us to the Justice," cried some.

"That I will, with all my heart," replied Wesley, and away they went.

The magistrate's house was two miles off, and before they had walked a mile the night came on, accompanied by heavy rain. The greater part of the senseless crowd dispersed, but two or three hundred still kept together, and presently some hastened forward to tell the magistrate they were bringing Mr. Wesley before him.

"What have I to do with Mr. Wesley?" said he. "Go and carry him back again."

By this time the main body came up and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane (the magistrate) had gone to bed. His son followed, and asked what was the matter.

"Why, an't please you," said the spokesman, "they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning; and what would your worship advise us to do?"

"To go home," was the answer, "and be quiet."

Finding it impossible to obtain an audience with the magistrate, the mob then hurried Wesley to Walsal, to Mr. Justice Persehouse. It was then about seven o'clock, and Mr. Persehouse also sent word out that he had gone to bed.

"Now," says Wesley, "they were at a stand again; but at last they thought it was the wisest course to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convoy me; but we had not gone a hundred yards when the mob of Walsal came pouring in, like a flood, and bore down all before

them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could; but they were weary as well as out-numbered; so that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away and left me in their hands.

"To attempt speaking was in vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea; so they dragged me along till we came to the town, where, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half open, I made towards it, and would have gone in, but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying, 'They would pull the house down to the ground.' However, I stood at the door and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no, knock his brains out; down with him; kill him at once.' Others said, 'Nay, but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' and continued speaking for above a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed; when the floods began to lift up their voice again, many crying out, 'Bring him away, bring him away.'

"But in the meantime my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud into prayer. And now the man who had just before headed the mob turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately; at the same time the gentleman in the shop cried out, 'For shame, for shame; let him go.' An honest butcher, who was a little further off, said, 'It was a shame they should do this,' and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running on the most fiercely. The people then, as if it had been by common con-

sent, fell back to their right and left; while those three or four men took me between them, and carried me through them all.

"But on the bridge the mob rallied again; we therefore went on one side over the mill-dam, and thence through the meadows, till a little before ten God brought me safe to

JOHN WESLEY AT WEDNESBURY.

Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat, and a little skin from one of my hands.

"I never saw such a chain of Providences before; so many convincing proofs that the hand of God is on every person and thing, overruling all as it seemeth Him good.

"The poor woman at Darlaston who had headed that mob and sworn that none should touch me, when she saw her followers give way, ran into the thickest of the throng, and knocked down three or four men, one after another; but many assaulting her at once, she was soon overpowered, and had probably been killed in a few minutes (three men keeping her down and beating her with all their might), had not a man called to one of them, 'Hold, Tom, hold!' 'Who is there?' said Tom. 'What, honest Munchin! Nay, then, let her go.' So they held their hand, and let her get up and crawl home as well as she could.

"From the beginning to the end I found the same presence of mind as if I had been sitting in my own study; but I took no thought for one moment above another: only once it came into my mind that if they should throw me into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in my pocket; for myself I did not doubt but I should swim across, having but a thin coat and a light pair of boots.

"The circumstances that followed I thought were particularly remarkable. 1. That many endeavoured to throw me down while we were going down hill on a slippery path to the town, as well judging that if I were once on the ground I should hardly rise any more; but I made no stumble at all, nor the least slip, until I was entirely out of their hands. 2. That although many strove to lay hold on my collar or clothes to pull me down, they could not fasten at all; only one got fast hold of the flap of my waistcoat, which was soon left in his hand; the other flap, in the pocket of which was a bank-note, was torn but half off. 3. That a lusty man, just behind, struck at me several times with a large oaken stick, with which, if he had struck me once on the back of my head, it would have saved him all further trouble; but every time the blow was turned aside I know not how, for I could not move to the right hand or left. 4. That another came rushing through the press, and raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let

it drop, and only stroked my head, saying, 'What soft hair he has!' 5. That I stopped exactly at the Mayor's door, as if I had known it (which the mob doubtless thought I did), and found him standing in the shop, which gave the first check to the madness of the people. 6. That the very first men whose hearts were turned were the heroes of the town, the captains of the rabble on all occasions, one of them having been a prize-fighter at the bear-garden. 7. That from first to last I heard none give a reviling word, or call me by any opprobrious name whatever; but the cry of one and all was, 'The Preacher! the Preacher! the Parson! the Minister!' 8. That no creature, at least within my hearing, laid anything to my charge, either true or false, having in the hurry quite forgot to provide themselves with an accusation of any kind. And lastly, that they were as utterly at a loss what they should do with me, none proposing any determinate thing, only, 'Away with him; kill him at once.'

"By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for His will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two—one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out—but both were as nothing; for though one man struck me on the breast with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain from either of the blows than if they had touched me with a straw.

"It ought not to be forgotten that when the rest of the society made all haste to escape for their lives, four only would not stir" [mentioning their names]. "These kept with me, resolving to live or die together; and none of them received one blow but William Sitch, who held me by the arm from one end of the town to the other. He was then dragged away and knocked down, but he soon rose and got to me again. I afterwards asked him 'what he expected when the mob came

upon us?' He said, 'To die for Him who died for us;' and he felt no hurry or fear, but calmly waited till God should require his soul of him."

These were rough doings; but such was the beginning of Methodism in the "Black Country." Wesley mentions "as great a curiosity in its kind" as he believes was ever seen in England, that being nothing more nor less than that the very magistrates who refused to see him on the night when he was dragged to their door by the mob, issued a proclamation, within a few days, which commanded the police to make diligent search for those Methodist preachers who "go about, raising routs and riots, to the great damage of his Majesty's liege people, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King." The proclamation went on to say that when the said preachers were found they were to be carried before "some of us, his said Majesty's Justices of the Peace."

Notwithstanding all this, Charles Wesley boldly "bearded the lions in their den," only five days after his brother so wonderfully escaped. He found the poor Methodists "standing fast in one mind and spirit, in nothing terrified by their adversaries," and writes, "Never before was I in so primitive an assembly. We sung praises lustily, and with a good courage; and could all set our seal to the truth of our Lord's saying, 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' We assembled before day to sing hymns of praise to Christ; and, as soon as it was light, I walked down the town, and preached boldly on Rev. ii. 10. It was a most glorious time. Our souls were satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and we longed for our Lord's coming to confess us before His Father and His holy angels."

The clergyman at Darlaston was so struck with the meek behaviour of the Methodists in the midst of suffering, that he offered to join the Wesleys in punishing the rioters,[1] whilst "honest Munchin," the captain of the rabble, forsook his

[1] *Charles Wesley's Journal.*

godless companions and joined the Methodists, being received by Charles Wesley as a member on trial only five days after Wesley's escape.

"What thought you of my brother?" asked Charles of "honest Munchin."

"Think of him!" said he; "I thought he is a *mon* of God; and God was on his side, when so *mony* of us could not kill one *mon*."

Whitefield came to Wednesbury the following Christmas, and preached eloquently and with his usual power. Whitefield had now regained much if not all of the celebrity he had lost, and he was actively engaged in the work of his Calvinistic branch of the Methodist societies. Wesley and he were again friends, and though they now pursued separate courses and held different creeds, their aims were the same, and their affection for each other was very warm.

Wesley wrote of Whitefield—"I believe he is sincere in all he says, concerning his earnest desire of joining hand in hand with all that love the Lord Jesus Christ."

And Whitefield wrote of Wesley—"I think he is wrong in some things; but I believe he will shine bright in glory. I have not given way to him, or to any whom I thought in error, no, not for an hour; but I think it best not to dispute where there is no probability of convincing."

After Whitefield had preached several days in the streets of Wednesbury, he went away; but Charles Wesley returned on February 2, 1744. Egginton, the Wednesbury vicar,[1] had drawn up a paper, and sent the crier to give notice that all the Methodists must sign it, or their houses would be demolished. The paper was to the effect, "that they would neither read, or sing, or pray together, or hear the Methodist parsons any more." Several signed, through fear; and every one who did was mulcted a penny to assist in making the rabble drunk. This iniquitous proceeding had taken place about a month

[1] *Wesley's Works.*

before Charles Wesley arrived, and when he came Egginton was dead, but not a Methodist in Darlaston had escaped the violence of the mob, except two or three who had given their purses to the lawless gang. The windows of all the Methodists' houses were broken, neither glass, lead, nor frames remaining. Tables, chairs, chests of drawers, and whatever furniture was not easily removable, were dashed in pieces, and feather-beds were torn to shreds.

No craven-hearted man would have ventured to preach to humanised fiends like these, but the Wesleys came to them again and again. Charles, too, escaped unhurt, but the poor Methodists were again made to suffer from the brutal violence of their wicked neighbours. Again and again, when assaults were made, furniture broken, goods stolen, and lives threatened, the Methodists appealed to the magistrates, but in vain; they could obtain no redress.

A document stating their grievances was drawn up on February 26, 1744, when the persecuted Methodists added—

"We keep meeting together morning and evening, are in great peace and love with each other, and are nothing terrified by our adversaries. God grant we may endure to the end!"

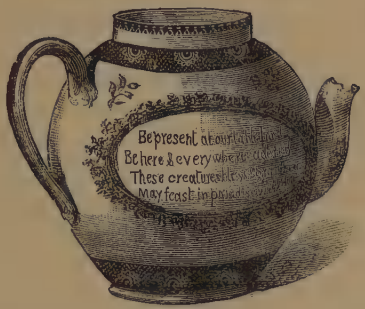
The temper in which the Wesleys endured these cruel persecutions is shown in a hymn said to be written by Charles after one of these tumults; it begins—

"Worship, and thanks, and blessing,
And strength ascribe to Jesus!
Jesus alone defends His own,
When earth and hell oppress us.
Jesus with joy we witness
Almighty to deliver;
Our souls set to, that God is true,
And reigns a King for ever."

Charles, the sweet singer! some of whose hymns are the

dearest to almost every churchman's heart, yet who, alas, was forced, even on one occasion by personal violence,[1] to desist from preaching in the churches' pulpits.

[1] It is said that on one occasion the churchwardens laid their hands upon Charles's gown to constrain him to come down from the pulpit.



WESLEY'S TEA-POT.

(*Presented to Wesley by Wedgwood, the famous potter of Staffordshire.*)

CHAPTER XXIX.

PREACHING IN CORNWALL.

An old writer tells us that they who would go to Heaven must do four kinds of service—*hard* service, *costly* service, *derided* service, and *forlorn* service. Wesley's service never was the last, but we have seen how hard it often was. And it was *costly*, for it entailed the sacrifice of much which men hold dear, ease, leisure—we find Wesley sometimes sighing, "Oh, for a little quiet!"—an honourable position in the world of learning, preferment in the Church, for which, as such a distinguished Fellow of his College, he was so well entitled. His service, too, was *derided* at times both by the press and the people to whom he preached, yet he stood on such high ground, he scarcely seems to have noticed that; only, sometimes, an impatient utterance escapes him, as, for instance, when he says, "I preached at Pocklington with an eye to the death of that lovely woman, Mrs. Cross. A gay young gentleman with a young lady stepped in, stayed five minutes, and went out again, with as easy an unconcern as if they had been listening to a ballad singer. I mentioned to the congregation the deep folly and ignorance implied in such behaviour. These pretty fools never thought that, for this very opportunity, they are to give an account before men and angels." On another occasion, when his congregation had appeared insensible, he said, "They *hear*, but when will they *feel!* Oh, what can man do toward raising dead bodies or dead souls!"

But he was generally listened to with deep attention and devout reverence; even those who were indifferent to the truths he uttered being overawed by the demeanour of the

majority. Wesley compared them favourably with some churchgoers. "I wonder," says he, "at those who talk of the *indecency* of field-preaching. The highest *indecency* is in St. Paul's Church, where a considerable part of the congregation are asleep, or talking, or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says. On the other hand, there is the highest decency in a churchyard or field, where the whole congregation behave and look as if they saw the Judge of All, and heard Him speaking from Heaven." Sometimes, says one writer, when he had finished the discourse and pronounced the blessing, not a person offered to move:—the charm was upon them still; and every man, woman, and child remained where they were until he left the ground. One day many of his hearers sat upon a low wall, built of loose stones, and in the middle of the sermon it fell with them.

"I never saw, heard, nor read of such a thing before," he said. "The whole wall, and the persons sitting upon it, sunk down together, none of them screaming out, and very few altering their posture, and not one was hurt at all; but they appeared sitting at the bottom just as they sat at the top. Nor was there any interruption either of my speaking or of the attention of the hearers."

The situations in which he preached sometimes contributed to heighten the impression, and he perceived "that natural influences operated upon the multitude like the pomp and circumstance of Romish worship."[1]

On a hot and cloudless day he would stand under cover of the sycamores which afforded shade to some of the old farmhouses in Westmorland and Cumberland, and which now shaded his congregation. He mentions once that a bird, perched on a branch close by, sung without intermission from the beginning of the service to the end, and that no instrumental concert would have accorded with the place and feeling of the hour so well.

[1] Southey.

In Cornwall, whither the Wesleys repaired after their rough experiences in the "Black Country," there were many of these natural advantages. One of his preaching-houses there was what had once been the courtyard of a rich and honourable man, who with his family had long been dead, and their memory had almost perished.

At Gwennap, in the same county, he preached in a sort of natural amphitheatre, of which he said, "I stood on the wall, in the calm, still evening, with the setting sun behind me, and almost an innumerable multitude before, behind, and on either hand. Many likewise sat on the little hills, at some distance from the bulk of the congregation. But they could all hear distinctly while I read, '*The disciple is not above his Master*,' and the rest of those comfortable words which are, day by day, fulfilled in our ears."

And he spoke of the same favourite preaching-place in his old age, saying, "I think this is one of the most magnificent spectacles which is to be seen on this side of Heaven. And no music is to be heard on earth comparable to the sound of many thousand voices, when they are all harmoniously joined together, singing praises to God and the Lamb."

Charles Wesley came to St. Ives on the 16th of July 1743, and he there met with much rough treatment, sticks and stones being used, and many, especially women, meeting with personal violence. At Pool, on the 26th of July, the churchwarden shouted and hallooed, and put his hat to Charles Wesley's mouth to prevent his preaching. These outrages, it is sad to say, were principally instigated by clergymen, who continually spoke of the Methodists as "popish emissaries" that, as one of them said, "ought to be driven away by blows, and not by arguments."

At length, however, the mayor of St. Ives took steps to suppress the rioters by force of arms. Charles Wesley was called away to London on August the 8th, but a fortnight later his brother, accompanied by John Nelson and two others,

WESLEY AND NELSON PICKING BLACKBERRIES.

succeeded him. They reached St. Ives on the 30th of August, and found the society of Methodists increased to one hundred and twenty. Nelson began to work at his trade as a stone-mason, and, as he found opportunity, preached at St. Just, the Land's End, and other places.

One of Wesley's assistants fell ill, and was not able to preach at all. And the others had some very rough experiences; Wesley and Nelson slept upon the floor, the former using Nelson's overcoat for a pillow, and Nelson using Burkitt's *Notes on the New Testament* for his.[1] One morning, at three o'clock, after using this hard bed for a fortnight, Wesley, who could not sleep, said to his companion—

"Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer, for the skin is off but one side yet."

They fared badly, too, in the matter of food; they were continually preaching; but "it was seldom," said Nelson, "that any one asked us to eat or drink. One day, as we were returning from St. Hilary Downs, Mr. Wesley stopped his horse to pick the blackberries, saying—

"'Brother Nelson, we ought to be thankful that there are plenty of blackberries; for this is the best country I ever saw for getting an appetite, but the worst for getting food.'"

Upon the whole, however, Wesley was kindly treated in Cornwall, where he stayed about three weeks, and this although his reception had been a very noisy one; for the mob at St. Ives welcomed him with a loud huzza, and serenaded him before his window with the ditty—

> "Charles Wesley is come to town,
> To try if he can pull the churches down."

And during his stay the only act of violence he met with was when, on one occasion, the mob burst into the room at St. Ives, and a ruffian struck him on the head.

It was on one of Wesley's later visits to Cornwall that the

[1] Tyerman.

following scene occurred, which we will give in the graphic words (as they have been handed down to us) of old Peter Martin, who was sexton of the parish of Helstone sixty-five years :—

"I first heard Mr. Wesley preach in the street, near our market-house, seventy-four years ago. I had an adventure with him when I was ostler at the London Inn. Mr. Wesley came there one day in a carriage, driven by his own servant, who, being unacquainted with the road further westward than Redruth, he obtained my master's leave for me to drive him to St. Ives. We set out, and on our arrival at Hayle we found the sands between that and St. Ives, over which we had to pass, overflowed by the rising tide. On reaching the water's edge, I hesitated to proceed, and advised him of the danger of crossing; and a captain of a vessel, seeing us stopping, came up and endeavoured to persuade us from an undertaking so full of peril, but without effect. Mr. Wesley had resolved to go on; he said he had to preach at St. Ives at a certain hour, and that he must fulfil his appointment. Looking out of the carriage window, he called loudly to me, 'Take the sea! take the sea!' In a moment I dashed into the waves, and was quickly involved in a flood of waters. The horses were now swimming, and the carriage became overwhelmed with the tide, as the hind wheels were not unfrequently merged in the deep pits and hollows in the sands. I struggled hard to maintain my seat in the saddle, while the poor affrighted animals were snorting and rearing in the most terrific manner. I expected every moment to be swept into eternity, and the only hope I then cherished was on account of driving so holy a man.

"At that awful crisis I heard Mr. Wesley's voice. With difficulty I turned my head toward the carriage, and saw his long white locks dripping with water, which ran down the rugged furrows of his venerable countenance. He was looking calmly forth from the windows, undisturbed by the

tumultuous roar of the surrounding waters, or by the dangers of his perilous situation.

"He hailed me in a tolerably loud voice, and asked, 'What is thy name, driver?'

"I answered, 'Peter, sir.'

"He said, 'Peter, fear not; thou shalt not sink.'

"With vigorous spurring and whipping I again urged on the flagging horses, and at last got safely over; but it was a miracle. We continued our way, and reached St. Ives without further hindrance. We were very wet, of course.

"Mr. Wesley's first care after our arrival was to see me comfortably lodged in a public-house; he procured me warm clothing, a good fire, and excellent refreshment. Neither were the horses forgotten. Totally unmindful of himself, he proceeded, wet as he was, to the chapel and preached according to his appointment."

At St. Ives, when a high wind prevented Wesley standing where he had intended, he found a little enclosure near the spot, one end of which was native rock, rising ten or twelve feet perpendicular, from which the ground fell with an easy descent. "A jutting out of the rock, about four feet from the ground," he said, "gave me a very convenient pulpit. Here well-nigh the whole town, high and low, rich and poor, assembled together. Nor was there a word to be heard, nor a smile seen, from one end of the congregation to the other. It was just the same the three following evenings. Indeed I was afraid on Saturday that the roaring of the sea raised by the north wind would have prevented their hearing. But God gave me so clear and strong a voice that I believe scarce one word was lost."

On his way to Cornwall, and also on returning, Wesley preached at Exeter, and visited a lad and a clergyman, both sentenced to death. Southey tells us, "There is a beautiful garden at Exeter, under the ruins of the castle and of the old city wall, in what was formerly the moat; it was made

WESLEY AND THE OSTLER.

under the direction of Jackson, the musician, a man of rare genius in his own art, and eminently gifted in many ways. Before the ground was thus happily appropriated, Wesley preached there to a large assembly, and felt the impressiveness of the situation. He says, "It was an awful sight! So vast a congregation in that solemn amphitheatre, and all silent and still, while I explained at large and enforced that glorious truth, 'Happy are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.'"

Wesley also preached at the Cross at Taunton, where a man, attempting to make disturbance, so exasperated the congregation, that there was a general cry, "Knock the rascal down; beat out his brains!" and Wesley had to interfere to prevent his being roughly handled.

Wesley also paid a flying visit to the Isles of Scilly, crossing the ocean in a fishing-boat, and singing amid the swelling waves—

> "When passing through the watery deep,
> I ask in faith His promised aid;
> The waves an awful distance keep,
> And shrink from my devoted head,
> Fearless, their violence I dare;
> They cannot harm,—for God is there."

Speaking of the "Land's End," one writer tells us that Wesley admired this singular promontory, and visited it more than once. In 1785, when "the shadows of the evening were gathering round him," he made his last visit. He was then over eighty years old. "It was singular to behold an old man over fourscore years, with white hair, furrowed cheeks, and infirm limbs, climbing over huge steep rocks that hung in precipices over the sea, to get a better view of a bold promontory where two oceans meet."

"We went," he wrote, "to the Land's End, in order to which we clambered down the rocks to the very edge of the water. I cannot but think the sea has gained some hundreds of yards since I was there forty years ago."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIRST CONFERENCE.

MUCH of Wesley's time was taken up in conversing with individuals; and in January 1743, we find him at Bristol and Kingswood, speaking to each member of the society. "I cannot understand," he says, "how any minister can hope ever to give up his account with joy unless (as Ignatius advises) he knows all his flock by name; not overlooking the men-servants and maid-servants."

In London, Wesley and his brother began visiting the society together in February, "which they continued from six in the morning till six at night, until the visiting was completed."

The London society now consisted of nineteen hundred and fifty members; before the year was ended it numbered twenty hundred. The members alone, without their children, servants, and outside hearers, were almost sufficient to fill the Foundry twice over. It was necessary that they should have more room, and presently Wesley obtained and opened a chapel in West Street, Seven Dials, and a little later another at Snowfields.

Wesley's labours now, as ever, were unremitting, and still he undertook fresh ones with undiminished zeal. From time to time he published books and pamphlets as it occurred to him they would be useful. In answer to an oft-repeated cry that he and his coadjutors were making preaching the means of replenishing their purses, he stated in his work, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, that the moneys given by the Methodists never came into his hands at all, but were

received and expended by the stewards in relieving the poor, and in buying, erecting, or repairing chapels; and that, so far from there being any overplus when this was done, he himself at that moment was in debt to the amount of £650, on account of the meeting-houses in London, Bristol, and Newcastle. Addressing himself to his brother clergymen, he asked—

"For what price will you preach eighteen or nineteen times every month; and this throughout the year? What shall I give you to travel seven or eight hundred miles, in all weathers, every two or three months? For what salary will you abstain from all other diversions than the doing good and the praising God? I am mistaken if you would not prefer strangling to such a life, even with thousands of gold and silver.

"I will now simply tell you my sense of these matters, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear. Food and raiment I have; such food as I choose to eat, and such raiment as I choose to put on. I have a place where to lay my head; I have what is needful for life and godliness; and I apprehend this is all the world can afford. The kings of the earth can give me no more. For as to gold and silver, I count it dung and dross; I trample it under my feet; I esteem it just as the mire of the streets. I desire it not; I seek it not; I only fear lest any of it should cleave to me, and I should not be able to shake it off before my spirit returns to God. I will take care (God being my helper) that none of the accursed thing shall be found in my tents when the Lord calleth me hence. Hear ye this, all you who have discovered the treasures which I am to leave behind me: if I leave behind £10,—above my debts and my books, or what may happen to be due on account of them,—you and all mankind bear witness against me, that I lived and died a thief and a robber."

Tyerman adds, "Wesley kept his word; for within twelve months of his decease he closed his cash-book with the

THE FIRST CONFERENCE.

following words, written with a tremulous hand, so as to be scarcely legible—

"'For upwards of eighty-six years I have kept my accounts exactly; I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can, and give all I can; that is, all I have.'"

The work of superintending all the preachers, and, through them, all the large body of Methodists, had, in 1744, become too great for Wesley to undertake any longer alone, or even with the assistance of his brother. He therefore called together his brother, four clergymen, and four lay-preachers to confer with him on the affairs of the societies.

Thus it was that the first Methodist Conference met at the Foundry on Monday, June 25th.

Wesley wrote in his Journal: "Monday, June 25th, and the five following days, we spent in conference with our preachers, seriously considering by what means we might the most effectually save our own souls and them that heard us. And the result of our consultations we set down to be the rule of our future practice."

The arrangement was found to work so well that from that time a Methodist Conference was held annually, Wesley himself, during his long life, presiding at forty-seven of them.

The day before the Conference commenced was one to be remembered. During the course of it Holy Communion was administered by five clergymen to the whole of the London Society, then numbering between two and three thousand members.

The Conference was opened with solemn prayer, a sermon by Charles Wesley, and the baptism of an adult. The three points debated were—(1.) What to teach. (2.) How to teach. (3.) How to regulate doctrine, discipline, and practice.

In regard to the first point, "it was settled that to be justified is to be pardoned and received into God's favour; that

faith, preceded by repentance, is the condition of justification;[1] that repentance is a conviction of sin; that faith in general is a divine supernatural *elenchos* of things not seen; and that justifying faith is a conviction by the Holy Ghost, that Christ loved me and gave Himself for me; that no man can be justified and not know it; that the immediate fruits of justifying faith are peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down inward sin; that wilful sin is inconsistent with justifying faith; that no believer need ever again come into condemnation; that works are necessary for the continuance of faith, which cannot be lost but for want of them; and that St. Paul and St. James do not contradict each other, when one says Abraham was not justified by works, and the other that he was, because they do not speak of the same justification, and because they do not speak of the same works—St. Paul speaking of works that precede faith, and St. James of works that spring from it.

"The Conference further agreed that Adam's sin is imputed to all mankind in the sense that, in consequence of such sin —(1) our bodies are mortal; (2) our souls disunited from God, and of a sinful, devilish nature; and (3) we are liable to death eternal. It was further agreed that the Bible never expressly affirms that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any, but rather that faith is imputed to us for righteousness. At the same time, the Conference conceived that, by the merits of Christ, all men are cleared from the guilt of Adam's actual sin; that their bodies will become immortal after the resurrection; that their souls receive a capacity of spiritual life, and an actual spark or seed thereof; and that all believers are reconciled to God and made partakers of the Divine nature.

"Sanctification was defined, a renewal in the image of God, in righteousness, and true holiness; to be a perfect Christian is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, implying the destruction of all inward sin; and faith

[1] Tyerman.

is the condition or instrument by which such a state of grace is obtained."

Amongst other things which were then settled, the Conference proceeded to resolve that they would defend the doctrine of the Church of England both by their preaching and living; they would obey the bishops in all indifferent matters, and observe the canons as far as they could with a safe conscience; and finally they resolved *to exert themselves to the utmost not* to entail a schism in the Church, by their hearers forming themselves into a distinct sect; though they agreed that they must not neglect the present opportunity of saving souls, for fear of consequences which might possibly, or probably, happen after they were dead.

"The belief was expressed that the design of God in raising up the preachers called Methodists was to reform the nation, more particularly the Church, and to spread Scriptural holiness through the land."

This is deeply interesting, showing as it does that the founders of Methodism were attached to the Church, but still more so to what they believed to be their mission, or the purpose for which they were "raised up by God," and, whilst admitting the grave possibility, or probability, that after they were dead their successors might form a distinct sect, they still dared not neglect their present opportunity of saving souls. Many details were then settled relating to the rules respecting bands, meetings, members, lay-assistants—who were allowable only in cases of necessity—and the circuits which the preachers were to take. Wesley's maxim was, never to strike a blow in any place where it could not be followed up; he believed that to awaken sinners to repentance, and then to leave them without further instruction and supervision, was to leave them in imminent danger from the powers of darkness. And he also believed that it was very good for souls to have a frequent change of teachers; hence the constant movement of the Wesleyan ministers from one place to another.

The next week was spent by Wesley and his coadjutors in trying to weed from the society "all who did not work worthy of the Gospel." "By this means," he goes on to say, "we reduced the number of members to less than nineteen hundred. But number is an inconsiderable circumstance. May God increase them in faith and love!"

How rapidly, in spite of Wesley's strictness, the members had multiplied! Four years before, when Wesley separated from the "brethren" at Fetter Lane, only fifty or sixty followed him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

LAST SERMON BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY.

EXACTLY a month after that first Methodist Conference, upon Friday, August 24th, the anniversary of St. Bartholomew, Wesley preached his last sermon before the University of Oxford. Being on the foundation of a college and a Master of Arts, this duty came to him by rotation, and, had he declined it, he would have had to provide a substitute. It happened to be the race week, and the audience was much augmented by the racing-men; and we learn from Charles Wesley that he and two other of Wesley's clerical friends were present, that some of the heads of colleges stood during the whole service, and fixed their eyes upon the preacher; and that, after the sermon, the little band of four Methodist clergymen walked away in form, none daring to join them.[1]

Wesley writes:—[2]

"I preached, I suppose, for the last time at St. Mary's. Be it so. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul. The beadle came to me afterwards, and told me the Vice-Chancellor had sent him for my notes. I sent them without delay, not without admiring the wise providence of God. Perhaps few men of note would have given a sermon of mine the reading, if I had put it into their hands; but, by this means, it came to be read, probably more than once, by every man of eminence in the University.

"I am well pleased that the sermon was preached on the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke. Yet

[1] *C. Wesley's Journal.* [2] *Wesley's Works.*

what a wide difference is there between their case and mine! They were turned out of house and home, and all that they had; whereas I am only hindered from preaching, without any other loss; and that in a kind and honourable manner, it being determined that when my next turn to preach came, they would pay another person to preach for me; and so they did, twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my fellowship."

The celebrated Dr. Kennicott[1] was at that time an undergraduate at Oxford; he had no sympathy with the Methodists, but he wrote thus of Wesley's sermon:—

"All that are Masters of Arts, and on the foundation of any college, are set down in a roll, as they take their degree; and in that order preach before the University, or pay three guineas for a preacher in their stead; and as no clergyman can avoid his turn, so the University can refuse none; otherwise Mr. Wesley would not have preached. He came to Oxford some time before, and preached frequently every day in courts, public-houses, and elsewhere. On Friday morning, having held forth twice in private, at five and at eight, he came to St. Mary's at ten o'clock. There were present the Vice-Chancellor, the proctors, most of the heads of houses, a vast number of gownsmen, and a multitude of private people, with many of Wesley's own people, both brethren and sisters. He is neither tall nor fat; for the latter would ill become a Methodist. His black hair quite smooth, and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man. His prayer was soft, short, and conformable to the rules of the University. His text was Acts iv. 31. He spoke it very slowly, and with an agreeable emphasis" (here the sermon is described). "When he came to what he called his plain, practical conclusion, he fired his address with so much zeal and unbounded satire as quite spoiled what otherwise might have been turned to great advantage; for, as I liked

[1] Tyerman.

some, so I disliked other parts of his discourse extremely. I liked some of his freedom, such as calling the generality of young gownsmen 'a generation of triflers,' and many other just invectives. But, considering how many shining lights are here, that are the glory of the Christian cause, his sacred censure was much too flaming and strong, and his charity much too weak in not making large allowances. But, so far from allowances, he concluded, with a lifted-up eye, in this most solemn form—'It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand;' words full of such presumption and seeming imprecation, that they gave an universal shock. This, and the assertion that Oxford was not a Christian city, and this country not a Christian nation, were the most offensive parts of the sermon, except when he accused the whole body (and confessed himself to be one of the number) of the sin of perjury; and for this reason, because, upon becoming members of a college, every person takes an oath to observe the statutes of the University, and no one observes them in all things. Had these things been omitted and his censures moderated, I think his discourse, as to style and delivery, would have been uncommonly pleasing to others as well as to myself. He is allowed to be a man of great parts, and that by the excellent Dean of Christ Church (Dr. Conybeare); for the day he preached the Dean generously said of him, 'John Wesley will always be thought a man of sound sense, though an enthusiast.' However, the Vice-Chancellor sent for the sermon, and I hear the heads of colleges intend to show their resentment."

And now let us look at the sermon itself. It had three divisions, and considers Christianity under three different aspects. (1.) Christianity beginning to exist in individuals. (2.) As spreading from one to another. (3.) As covering the earth. Of these, says Tyerman, nothing need be said; that which gave offence was the plain, practical application which the courageous preacher dared to end with.

"I beseech you, brethren," he said, "by the mercies of God, if ye do account me a madman or a fool, yet *as a fool bear with me.* It is utterly needful that some one should use great plainness of speech towards you. It is more especially needful at *this* time; for who knoweth but it is the *last?* And who will use this plainness if I do not? Therefore I, even I, will speak. And I adjure you, by the living God, that ye steel not your hearts against receiving a blessing at *my* hands.

"Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, is this city a *Christian* city? Is *Christianity*, *Scriptural Christianity*, found here? Are we, considered as a community of men, so filled with the Holy Ghost as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit? Are all the magistrates, all heads and governors of colleges and halls, and their respective societies (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town), of one heart and soul? Is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Are our tempers the same that were in Christ? And are our lives agreeable thereto?

"In the fear and in the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I will shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for your office sake, to consider, Are you filled with the Holy Ghost? Are ye lively portraitures of Him whom ye are appointed to represent among men? Ye magistrates and rulers, are all the thoughts of your hearts, all your tempers and desires, suitable to your high calling? Are all your words like unto those which come out of the mouth of God? Is there in all your actions dignity and love?

"Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, are you filled with the Holy Ghost? with all those fruits of the Spirit which your important office so indispensably requires? Do you continually remind those under your care that the one rational end of all our studies is

to know, love, and serve the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent? Do you inculcate upon them, day by day, that without love all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit? Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God and of all mankind for His sake? Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken—using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power?

"What example is set them" [the youth] "by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers,—by fellows, students, scholars,—more especially those who are of some rank and eminence? Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit,—in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance, and in unwearied, restless endeavours to do good, in every kind unto all men? Is this the general character of fellows of colleges? I fear it is not. Rather, have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, *perhaps* not always by our enemies, nor *wholly* without ground?"

He then proceeds to ask similar, but, if possible, more solemn questions of those who were "more immediately consecrated to God," respecting their office and the zeal with which they try to "save souls from death."

Then he makes a stirring appeal to the undergraduates, asking if they have "either the form or the power of *Christian* godliness."

"In the name of the Lord Almighty," he cries at length to all, "I ask, what religion are you of? Even the talk of Christianity ye cannot, will not hear? Oh! my brethren, what a Christian city is this? It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand."

And then he adds sadly, "For indeed what probability, what possibility, is there that Christianity, Scriptural Christianity,

should be again the religion of this place? That all orders of men among us should speak and live as men filled with the Holy Ghost? By whom should this Christianity be restored? By those of you that are in authority? Are you desirous it should be restored? And do ye not count your fortune, liberty, life, dear unto yourselves, so ye may be instrumental in restoring it? But suppose ye have this desire, who hath any power proportioned to the effect? Perhaps some of you have made a few attempts, but with how small success? Shall Christianity then be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable men? I know not whether ye yourselves would suffer it. Would not some of you cry out, 'Young man, in so doing thou reproachest us'? But there is no danger of your being put to the proof; so hath iniquity overspread us like a flood. Whom then shall God send? The famine, the pestilence, or the sword, the last messengers of God to a guilty land? The armies of the Romish aliens, to reform us into our first love? Nay, rather let us fall into Thy hands, O Lord, and let us not fall into the hand of man!"

"Who can find fault with it (this 'plain, practical application')?" says the biographer above-named. "Rather, who will not commend the bold preacher, who in such yearning accents gave utterance to truths of the highest consequence, but which perhaps no one but himself, in such a congregation, durst have uttered?"

But Wesley was to preach no more at St. Mary's henceforward, as we have seen. So long as he held his fellowship a paid substitute was to preach in his turn. Well, the University would have no more of his burning words, his stirring enthusiasm, his bold reproofs, and Wesley passed on to other scenes, feeling, as he quaintly expressed it, that, at all events, he had "delivered his own soul."

CHAPTER XXXII.

ITINERATING.

THE persecutions still continued in different parts of the country. The story of Nelson being pressed for a soldier, and his subsequent sufferings in prison, has been told so often that it is needless to repeat it. In Cornwall Maxfield was seized, by means of a warrant issued by the magistrates for the purpose of apprehending several of the obnoxious people (the Methodists), as being "able-bodied men, who had no lawful calling or sufficient maintenance." His captors offered him to the captain of a king's ship then in Mount's Bay, but the officer refused to take him, saying—

"I have no authority to take such men as these, unless you would have me give him so much a week to preach and pray to my people."

Maxfield was then thrown into prison at Penzance, and then delivered over as a soldier.

A few days after, a Cornish gentleman, Mr. Ustick, came up to Wesley, as he was preaching in the open air, saying—

"Sir, I have a warrant from Dr. Borlase, and you must go with me."

Mr. Ustick was somewhat perturbed when he found that, instead of a wild hare-brained fanatic, as he had doubtless been led to expect, he had taken into custody apparently a most respectable clergyman. Changing his manner, he asked Wesley with great civility if he were willing to go with him to the Doctor, to which Wesley replied that he would go immediately if he pleased.

"Sir, I must wait upon you to your inn, and in the

morning, if you will go with me, I will show you the way," replied Mr. Ustick.

They accordingly rode there in the morning, but, as the Doctor did not happen to be at home, Mr. Ustick said he had fulfilled his commission, took leave of Wesley, and left him at liberty.

That same evening, when Wesley was preaching at Gwennap, two gentlemen rode up fiercely, crying out—

"Seize him! seize him for his Majesty's service!"

Finding the order was not obeyed, one of them alighted, caught him by the cassock, and said, "I take you to serve his Majesty."

Seizing hold of his arm, he walked away with him, talking until he was out of breath of what he called the wickedness of the society.

At last, taking advantage of a moment's pause, Wesley said, "Sir, be they what they will, I apprehend it will not justify you in seizing me in this manner, and violently carrying me away, as you said, to serve his Majesty."

Perhaps the dignity of Wesley's remonstrance, or an instant apprehension of the consequences which might result from acting illegally towards a gentleman who seemed to understand the law, caused the other to waver in his purpose, and the colloquy ended by his escorting Wesley back to the place from which he had taken him.

The next day the house in which Wesley was visiting an invalid lady at Falmouth was beset by a mob, who shrieked, "Bring out the *Canorum*—where is the *Canorum?*" a nickname which, for some reason not known now, the Cornish men had given the Methodists.

The crews of some privateers headed the rabble, and they broke open the outer door and filled the passage. By that time all in the house had escaped but Wesley and a servant girl, who begged him to hide himself. But that was not Wesley's way; instead, as soon as the partition was broken down, he stepped into the midst of them, saying—

"Here I am! Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? or you? or you?"

Whilst talking thus he made his way, bareheaded, into the street, where he continued speaking until the captain swore no one should touch him. A clergyman and some of the better inhabitants then interfered and took him into a house, and afterwards sent him by water to Penryn.

Charles, meantime, was in equal or greater danger at Devizes. The rabble there were supplied by two men of consequence in the town with as much ale as they could drink while they plied an engine into the house where Charles Wesley was, and flooded the rooms. The mayor's wife, whose profligate son Charles had been the means of converting, sent a message to Charles beseeching him to disguise himself in woman's clothes, and try to make his escape. But he would not attempt that, though matters were very serious, the only magistrate in the town having refused to act when called upon, and the mob even beginning to untile the house that they might get in through the roof.

"I remembered the Roman senators," said Charles Wesley, "sitting in the Forum, when the Gauls broke in upon them, but thought there was a fitter posture for Christians, and told my companion they should take us on our knees."

His friends, however, succeeded at last in making a sort of treaty with a hostile constable, who agreed to take him safely out of town, if he would promise never to preach there again.

"I shall promise no such thing," said Charles Wesley; "setting aside my office, I will not give up my birthright, as an Englishman, of visiting what place I please in his Majesty's dominions."

The point was, however, compromised by his saying it was not his present intention to preach, and he was escorted out of Devizes, the mob pursuing after with shouts and execrations.

One of the churches Wesley was allowed to preach in, in

Cornwall, was that of Laneast, of which Mr. Bennet was the aged clergyman. A strange scene happened in that church when Charles Wesley was preaching there in August "against harmless diversions."

Three clergymen were amongst his auditors — Messrs. Meriton, Thomson, and Bennet; and when he cried, "By harmless diversions I was kept asleep in the devil's arms, secure in a state of damnation, for eighteen years!" Mr. Meriton said aloud—

"And I for twenty-five."

"And I," exclaimed Mr. Thomson, "for thirty-five."

"And I," said Mr. Bennet, the venerable incumbent—"and I for above seventy."

During 1745 Wesley made two journeys to Newcastle and the North of England, riding, as usual, the whole of the way, and much hindered during the first journey, which took place in winter, by the frost and snow.

Wesley wrote:—"Many a rough journey have I had before, but one like this I never had, between wind and hail, and rain and ice, and snow and driving sleet, and piercing cold. But it is past. Those days will return no more, and are therefore as though they had never been.

> "'Pain, disappointment, sickness, strife,
> Whate'er molests or troubles life,
> However grievous in its stay,
> It shakes the tenement of clay,
> When past, as nothing we esteem;
> And pain, like pleasure, is a dream.'"

The besetting sin of the Newcastle Methodists was quarrelling among themselves, and Wesley's first work was to reconcile wrangling neighbours. On the second Sunday after his arrival a brutal bully, who was accustomed to abuse the Orphan House family and throw stones at them, assaulted Wesley, pushing him and cursing. The next day Wesley sent him the following note:—

"ROBERT YOUNG,—I expect to see you between this and Friday, and to hear from you that you are sensible of your fault; otherwise, in pity to your soul, I shall be obliged to inform the magistrates of your assaulting me in the street.

"I am, your real friend,

"JOHN WESLEY."

Robert Young immediately came and begged Wesley's pardon, promising to amend his ways.

The Orphan House was at once a place of worship, a school for orphans, a refuge for the injured and oppressed, the northern home of Wesley, and the theological institution of his young preachers. Here he gave them instruction, and here he himself studied. Here, too, for a time during his stay in 1745, he was visited by a Popish priest, who came to inquire what the Methodist views really were.

The Popish priest, by name John Adam, seems to have been much impressed by Wesley's preaching, and by all he saw of his single-hearted, devoted life, for presently he carried him off to preach at his own house in Osmotherley, a village with about a thousand inhabitants, sixty miles south of Newcastle. The priest and Wesley arrived there one evening, after a long ride over hill and dale. It was spring-time, and consequently the darkness of night had come on, and most of the villagers had retired to rest. But the indefatigable priest and his friends went round from house to house, arousing the people, and succeeded in about an hour in collecting a congregation in the chapel which formerly belonged to the Franciscan Friars. Wesley preached to them, and after midnight went to bed, feeling, he said, "no weariness at all." As early as five in the morning he preached again on Romans iii. 22. "A sermon," says Tyerman, "in a Popish chapel, on the great anti-Popish doctrine of justification by faith alone, part of the congregation having sat up all night for fear they should not awake in sufficient time to hear him." Many of them

THE ORPHAN HOUSE, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

either were or had been Papists, and one was a Quakeress, who, after the sermon, thus addressed Wesley:—

"Dost thou think water baptism an ordinance of Christ?"

"What saith Peter?" replied Wesley, quoting, "'Who can forbid water, that these should not be baptised, who have received the Holy Ghost even as we?'"

After he had said a few words more she cried out, "'Tis right! 'tis right! I will be baptised."

She was baptised, we are told, that very hour.

Writing to his brother of this visit to Osmotherley, Wesley says—"I preached in a large chapel, which belonged, a few years since, to a convent of Franciscan friars. I found I was got into the very centre of all the Papists in the North of England. '*Commessatorem haud satis commodum.*' This also hath God wrought."

A society was formed soon after, and in a few years a chapel was built. Osmotherley, in fact, became one of Wesley's favourite haunts; though it was seven miles from the direct road between London and Newcastle, and a place difficult to reach, he paid it sixteen visits; and the priest's house was on some occasions Wesley's home. When the latter visited him in 1776 he found him "just quivering over the grave;" and, on his visit a year later, he writes—"I found my old friend was just dead, after living a recluse life nearly fifty years. From one that attended him I learned that the sting of death was gone, and he calmly delivered up his soul to God."

At Osmotherley Wesley saw the remains of the Carthusian monastery, and wrote—"Who knows but some of the poor superstitious monks, who once served God here according to the light they had, may meet us by-and-by, in that house of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens?"

After his first visit to Osmotherley Wesley visited several Yorkshire towns, stayed a month in London putting many things right, which, as usual in his absence, had gone wrong,

and then proceeded to Cornwall, where he spent five weeks, returning to London on August 16th.

The nation was now in great excitement, owing to the Pretender, Charles Edward Stuart, having embarked from Brittany, with fifty of his Scotch and Irish adherents, and set up his standard in Scotland. Wesley, "hearing of more and more commotions in the North," hurried back to Newcastle, which he reached on September the 18th.

News had just arrived that the Pretender had reached Edinburgh, and the people of Newcastle were in great consternation. Wesley immediately began preaching to them from the text—"Who can tell, if God will return, and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?"

The Mayor of Newcastle summoned all the householders to meet him in the Town Hall to sign an agreement, to the effect that they would risk their goods and lives in defending the town against the common enemy. Wesley was not present, so he wrote to the Mayor to explain that his absence was not due to any disaffection to his Majesty King George. "But I knew not," he said, "how far it might be either necessary or proper for me to appear on such an occasion. I have no fortune at Newcastle; I have only the bread I eat, and the use of a little room for a few weeks in the year.

"All I can do for his Majesty, whom I honour and love,—I think not less than my own father,—is this: I cry unto God, day by day, in public and in private, to put all his enemies to confusion; and I exhort all that hear me to do the same; and, in their several stations, to exert themselves as loyal subjects, who so long as they fear God cannot but honour the king."

Wesley ended his letter with an appeal to the Mayor's piety. "I am persuaded you fear God, and have a deep sense that His kingdom ruleth over all. . . . Oh, sir, is it not possible to

give any check to these overflowings of ungodliness? to the open, flagrant wickedness, the drunkenness and profaneness which so abound, even in our streets? I just take leave to suggest this. May the God whom you serve direct you in this and in all things!"

The next day the news arrived of General Cope's disastrous defeat at Prestonpans. Newcastle was seized with panic. Many of the rich people fled, carrying off their most precious possessions. The poor people, too, were busy removing their goods, and, in the midst of the confusion, Wesley preached "on the wisdom of God in governing the world."

And this sort of thing continued; in the midst of terrible alarms Wesley preached on and visited societies in the country round about. When the danger seemed over for the present, he made another preaching tour, going as far as Epworth, where he had the pleasure at last of hearing Mr. Romley preach "an earnest, affectionate sermon," while he himself exhorted the society "to fear God and honour the king."

Within a week after his return to Newcastle, Field-marshal Wade and Prince Maurice of Nassau arrived with about nine thousand Dutch and English soldiers, which, when added to the other troops now there, made about fifteen thousand men, all encamped upon Newcastle Moor. No wonder that, in the state of morals at that time, wickedness abounded.

Wesley again wrote to the Mayor:—

"My soul has been pained day by day, even in walking the streets of Newcastle, at the senseless, shameless wickedness, the ignorant profaneness of the poor men to whom our lives are entrusted. The continual cursing and swearing, the wanton blasphemy of the soldiers in general. . . . Is there no man that careth for these souls? Doubtless there are some who ought to do so. But many of these, if I am rightly informed, receive large pay, and do just nothing. I would to God it were in my power to supply their lack of service." He

JOHN WESLEY'S STUDY IN THE ORPHAN HOUSE, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

then offered to preach to them once or twice a day (whilst in those parts), at any hour or in any place, and for no pay, "unless what my Lord shall give me at His appearing."

Then, anticipating that objections might be made to his doing this, lest the emotions he might excite would unnerve the men for their duty, he adds—

"If it be objected 'this conscience will make cowards of us all,' I answer, let us judge by the matter of fact. Let either friends or enemies speak. Did those who feared God behave as cowards at Fontenoy? Did John Haime, the dragoon, betray any cowardice before or after his horse sunk under him? Or did William Clements, when he received the first ball in his left, and the second in his right arm? Or John Evans, when the cannon-ball took off both his legs? Did he not call all about him, as long as he could speak, to praise and fear God, and honour the king? as one who feared nothing, but lest his last breath should be spent in vain."

The Mayor sent a message that he would communicate Wesley's proposal to the general. We are not told whether the general consented, but only that, five days after, Wesley was in the midst of the huge encampment preaching from, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!"

"None," says he, "attempted to make the least disturbance from the beginning to the end. Yet I could not reach their hearts. The words of a scholar did not affect them, like those of a dragoon or a grenadier."

The next day he preached to the troops again, and then a lieutenant endeavoured to raise a disturbance, but, repenting, told the soldiers at the end of the sermon that all that had been said was very good.

The day after, Wesley's text was, "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise might be given to them that believe;" and he now began to see some fruit of his labour. On the Sunday, when he preached again in the camp, a multitude of people flocked together, equestrians and

pedestrians, rich and poor, to whom he declared, "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

He afterwards addressed some Germans in their own language. This terminated his labours in the camp.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WESLEY'S IDEA OF A PRESBYTER.

FROM Newcastle, in the early part of 1745, Wesley wrote to a friend as follows:—

"Many persons still representing the *Methodists* as enemies to the clergy, I wrote to a friend the real state of the case, in as plain a manner as I could.

"1. About seven years since we began preaching *inward, present* salvation, as attainable by *faith alone.*

"2. For preaching this doctrine we were forbidden to preach in the churches.

"3. We then preached in private houses, as occasion offered; and when the houses could not contain the people, in the open air.

"4. For this many of the clergy preached or printed against us, as both heretics and schismatics.

"5. Persons who were convinced of sin begged us to advise them more particularly how to flee from the wrath to come. We replied, If they would all come at one time (for they were numerous), we would endeavour it.

"6. For this we were represented both from the pulpit and the press (we have heard it with our ears, and seen it with our eyes) as introducing Popery, raising sedition, practising both against Church and State; and all manner of evil was publicly said against us, and those who were accustomed to meet with us.

"7. Finding some truth herein—viz., That some of those who so met walked disorderly, we immediately desired them not to come to us any more.

"8. And the more steady were desired to overlook the rest, that we might know if they walked according to the Gospel.

"9. But now several of the bishops began to speak against us, either in conversation or in public.

"10. On this encouragement, several of the clergy stirred up the people to treat us as outlaws or mad dogs.

"11. The people did so, both in Staffordshire, Cornwall, and many other places.

"12. And they do so still, wherever they are not restrained by their fear of the secular magistrate.

"Thus the case stands at present. Now, what can we do, or what can your brethren do, toward healing this breach, which is highly desirable, that we may withstand with joint force the still increasing flood of Popery, Deism, and immorality?

"Desire of us anything we can do with a safe conscience, and we will do it immediately. Will you meet us here? Will you do what we desire of you, so far as you can with a safe conscience?

"Let us come to particulars. Do you desire us (1) To preach another, or to desist from preaching this doctrine?

"We think you do not desire it, as knowing we cannot do this with a safe conscience.

"Do you desire us (2) To desist from preaching in private houses, or in the open air?

"As things are now circumstanced, this would be the same as desiring us not to preach at all.

"Do you desire us (3) To desist from advising those who now meet together for that purpose; or, in other words, to dissolve our societies?

"We cannot do this with a safe conscience; for we apprehend many souls would be lost thereby, and that God would require their blood at our hands.

"Do you desire us (4) To advise them only one by one?

"This is impossible, because of their number.

"Do you desire us (5) To suffer those who walk disorderly still to mix with the rest?

"Neither can we do this with a safe conscience; 'because evil communications corrupt good manners.'

"Do you desire us (6) To discharge those leaders of bands or classes (as we term them) who overlook the rest?

"This is, in effect, to suffer the disorderly walkers still to mix with the rest, which we dare not do.

"Do you desire us (lastly) To behave with reverence toward those who are overseers of the Church of God, and with tenderness both to the character and persons of our brethren the inferior clergy.

"By the grace of God, we can and will do this. Yea, our conscience beareth us witness that we have already laboured so to do, and that at all times and in all places.

"If you ask what we desire of you to do, we answer—

"1. We do not desire any one of you to let us preach in your church, either if you believe us to preach false doctrine, or if you have upon any other ground the least scruple of conscience concerning it. But we desire any one who believes us to preach true doctrine, and has no scruple at all in this matter, may not be either publicly or privately discouraged from inviting us to preach in his church.

"2. We do not desire that any one who thinks we are heretics or schismatics, and that it is his duty to preach or print against us as such, should refrain therefrom, so long as he thinks it his duty (although in this case the breach can never be healed).

"But we desire that none will pass such a sentence till he has calmly considered both sides of the question; that he would not condemn us unheard, but first read what we have written, and pray earnestly that God may direct him in the right way.

"3. We do not desire any favour, if either Popery, sedition, or immorality be proved against us.

"But we desire you will not credit without proof any of

those senseless tales that pass current with the vulgar; that if you do not credit them yourselves, you will not relate them to others (which we have known done); yea, that you will confute them as far as ye have opportunity, and discountenance those who still retail them abroad.

"We do not desire any preferment, favour, or recommendation from those that are in authority, either in Church or State. But we desire—

"1. That if anything material be laid to our charge, we may be permitted to answer for ourselves. 2. That you would hinder your dependents from stirring up the rabble against us, who are certainly not the judges of these matters. And 3. That you would effectually suppress and thoroughly discountenance all riots and popular insurrections, which evidently strike at the foundation of all government, whether of Church or State.

"Now these things you certainly can do, and that with a safe conscience. Therefore, till these things are done, the continuance of the breach is chargeable on you, and you only."

This is a characteristically clear statement, and we see how reasonable, from Wesley's point of view, was every step he had hitherto taken.

In August the second Wesleyan Conference was held. Besides the two Wesleys, there was only one clergyman, Mr. Hodges, present; but there were six travelling preachers, and one gentleman who was not a preacher, but who was afterwards the father-in-law of Charles Wesley.

After discussing the doctrines of Justification and Assurance, the Conference debated points of Church government. The question was asked, "Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent Church government most agreeable to reason?" And the answer was in substance the following—

"The plain origin of Church government seems to be this: Christ sends forth a person to preach the Gospel;

some of those who hear him repent and believe in Christ; they then desire him to watch over them, to build them up in faith, and to guide their souls into paths of righteousness. Here then is an independent congregation, subject to no pastor but their own; neither liable to be controlled, in things spiritual, by any other man or body of men whatsoever. But, soon after, some from other parts, who were occasionally present whilst he was speaking in the name of the Lord, beseech him to come over and help them also. He complies, yet not till he confers with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their consent appoints one who has gifts and grace to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by his word, he appoints one in his absence to take the oversight of the rest, to assist them as of the ability which God giveth.

"These are deacons, or servants of the Church, and they look upon their first pastor as the common father of all their congregations, and regard him in the same light and esteem him still as the Shepherd of their souls. These congregations are not strictly independent, as they depend upon one pastor, though not upon each other.

"As these congregations increase, and the deacons grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate deacons, or helpers, in respect of whom they may be called presbyters, or elders, as their father in the Lord may be called the bishop, or overseer, of them all."

Wesley's mind was becoming more and more exercised about this matter of Church government, and we cannot be surprised when we reflect that, deeply attached as he was to the Church of England, it was daily becoming more difficult for him to work with her. Harshly had her priests excluded him from the majority of her pulpits; and we have seen how impossible he felt it to leave the souls he had awakened to their need of a Saviour, and in whom the New Life, or, it may

be, the long-buried Divine Spark of Life, was beginning to stir and grow, to the teaching of men who, in their heart of hearts, cared for none of these things. Hence the societies, with their class-meetings and class-leaders; hence, too, the lay-preachers, because so few ordained clergymen could and would assist in the work. And then Wesley had taught the Methodists so carefully to partake of the Holy Communion regularly, and to go to church for that purpose to receive it from the hands of the clergymen; and oh! the pity of it! in some parishes the clergy refused to give it to the people called Methodists. We have seen that at Epworth Wesley himself had been repelled from the Holy Table. He and the few ordained clergy who joined with him administered the Lord's Supper to the Methodists; but what would happen when they passed away? Were their people still to be deprived of that blessed sacrament? Or was it possible that, even when the bishops refused to ordain the Methodist preachers, they still might be ordained by some other means? Wesley believed that would not be right, and he fought against the idea. To one who wrote urging the two Wesleys to secede from the Church of England, he wrote at the end of 1745—

"We believe it would not be right for us to administer either Baptism or the Lord's Supper, unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in a succession from the Apostles.

"We believe there is, and always was, in every Christian Church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not) an outward priesthood ordained by Christ, and an outward sacrifice offered therein by men authorised to act as ambassadors of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

"We believe that the threefold order of ministers is not only authorised by its apostolical institution, but also by the written word."

Now it happened that as Wesley was proceeding to Bristol in the beginning of the next year (1746), the book which

engaged his attention—for, as we know, it was his custom to read as he rode—was a book written by Lord King,[1] then a rigid Dissenter, and a nephew of the celebrated Locke. The book was published by King when he was only twenty-two, and was entitled, "An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church, that flourished three hundred years after Christ; faithfully collected out of the extant writings of those ages."

Wesley was much influenced by this book; and, after reading it, he wrote: "In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are essentially of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a Church independent of all others."

"Thus," says Tyerman, "notwithstanding his strong affection for the Church of England, we find Wesley, almost at the commencement of his Methodist career, entertaining doubts respecting its ecclesiastical polity. The recorded decisions of the Conference of 1745 plainly show that he regarded his preachers as deacons and presbyters, and thought himself a Scriptural Bishop. Lord King's researches served to confirm these sentiments. In the minutes of the Conference held a year after this (1747), we find the following questions and answers:—

"'*Q.* Does a Church in the New Testament always mean a single congregation?

"'*A.* We believe it does. We do not recollect any instance to the contrary.

"'*Q.* What instance or ground is there then in the New Testament for a *national* Church?

"'*A.* We know none at all. We apprehend it to be a merely political institution.

[1] He rose to be Lord High Chancellor of England. He afterwards changed his views, and became a member of the Church of England.

"'*Q.* Are the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, plainly described in the New Testament?

"'*A.* We think they are; and believe they generally obtained in the Church of the Apostolic age.

"'*Q.* But are you assured that God designed the same plan should obtain in all Churches, throughout all ages?

"'*A.* We are not assured of this, because we do not know that it is asserted in Holy Writ.

"'*Q.* If this plan were essential to a Christian Church, what must become of all the foreign reformed Churches?

"'*A.* It would follow that they are no parts of the Church of Christ! A consequence full of shocking absurdity.

"'*Q.* In what age was the Divine right of episcopacy first asserted in England?

"'*A.* About the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Till then, all the bishops and clergy in England continually allowed and joined the ministrations of those who were not episcopally ordained.

"'*Q.* Must there not be numberless accidental varieties in the government of various Churches?

"'*A.* There must in the nature of things. For, as God variously dispenses His gifts of nature, providence, and grace, both the offices themselves and the officers in each ought to be varied from time to time.

"'*Q.* Why is it that there is no determinate plan of Church government appointed in Scripture?

"'*A.* Without doubt because the wisdom of God had a regard to this necessary variety.

"'*Q.* Was there any thought of uniformity in the government of all Churches, until the time of Constantine?

"'*A.* It is certain there was not; and would not have been then, had men consulted the Word of God only.'"

From this extract it would seem that either Lord King's book, or his own wishes, had caused Wesley's views respecting ecclesiastical polity to be considerably changed. He still loved

the Church of England, and ah! how much he must have longed for her to be reformed; to be, in fact, what she has since become! but he had begun to think that he, as a presbyter, was in fact a certain sort of bishop, and that therefore he might employ and set apart preachers, and thus give them a sacred office. Mr. Watson properly observes: "It has been generally supposed that Mr. Wesley did not consider his appointment of preachers an *ordination* to the ministry; but only as an irregular employment of laymen in the spiritual office of merely expounding the Scriptures in a case of moral necessity. This is not correct. They were not appointed to expound or preach merely, but were solemnly set apart to the pastoral office; nor were they regarded by him as *laymen*, except when in common parlance they were distinguished from the clergy of the Church.

"His usual mode of *setting apart or ordaining* to the ministry consisted of a most rigid examination of the ministerial candidate on the three points—Has he grace? has he gifts? has he fruit? preceded by fasting and prayer; and followed by official and authoritative appointment to ministerial work. For the present, the form of laying-on of hands was not employed; but it was thought of, and was discussed. Hence the following extract from the minutes of the Conference held in 1746:—

"'*Q.* Why do we not use more form and solemnity in receiving a new labourer?

"'*A.* We purposely decline it—(1) Because there is something of stateliness in it. (2) Because we would not make haste. We desire barely to follow Providence, as it gradually opens.'"

Thus we see that although Wesley might try to persuade himself and others that he was in a certain sense a bishop, and therefore able to ordain men to the sacred ministry, he yet knew then, when his mind was in its full vigour, that he had no right to "lay his hands" upon any man, and he knew also

the preachers he sent out had no right to administer the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

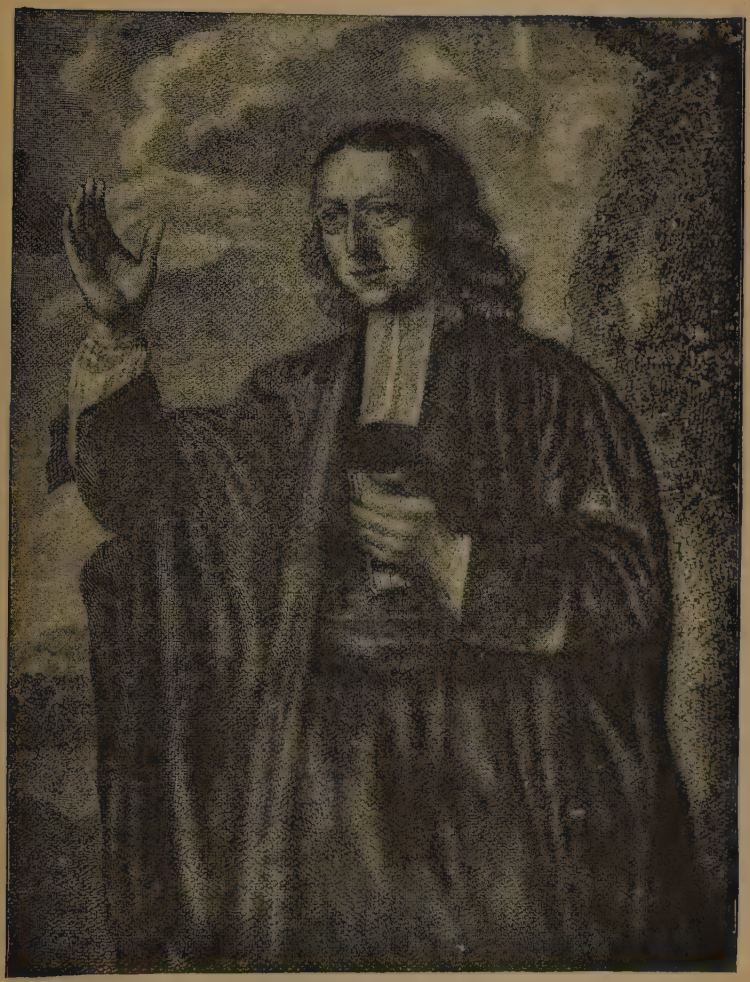
Afterwards, it is true, many, many years afterwards, when fears for the bereaved condition of the Methodists, when he should be gone, doubtless overpowered the wonderful mental powers which had outlasted so many of his compeers', Wesley thought and acted differently; but of that more anon.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FURTHER LABOURS.

THROUGHOUT the course of his long life, Wesley was continually writing, revising, and publishing a stream of penny tracts, and larger pamphlets and books, that attained to an enormous circulation, which, he says in one place, unawares made him rich; though, as we have seen, he could not remain so, the wants of others always appealing more highly to his purse-strings than his own. It was considered obligatory on his travelling preachers to extend as far as they were able the circulation of their leader's books. By this means the ideas which Wesley wanted to instil into the minds of the Methodist people were largely propagated. But the writing of many of these books, and the careful editing of others, must have cost him a great amount of labour. The feeling that his time was not his own, but belonged to his Master, was very strong upon him, and we find him utilising every spare moment; at one place, for instance, writing a tract to meet a special need while his clothes were drying at the fire, after a journey through rain and storm. Some of the books he selected and published or republished were very beautiful, and contained true Church teaching. Perhaps some of those who call themselves by his name would be startled at much of the doctrine therein contained. As, for instance, in the following extract from Brevint, which by publishing he made his own:—

"The Lord's Supper was chiefly ordained for a Sacrament—1. To *represent* the sufferings of Christ which are *past*, whereof it is a *memorial*. 2. To *convey* the first fruits of these sufferings,



JOHN WESLEY (HIS FAVOURITE PORTRAIT AT THE TIME).

in *present graces*, whereof it is a *means*. 3. To *assure* us of *glory to come*, whereof it is an infallible *pledge*.

"The sacrifice, which by a *real* oblation was not to be offered more than once, is, by a devout and thankful commemoration, to be offered up every day. The *sacrifice* in itself can never be repeated. Nevertheless, this Sacrament, by our remembrance, becomes a *kind of sacrifice*, whereby we present before God the Father that precious oblation of His Son once offered. To *men*, the Holy Communion is a *sacred table*, where God's minister is ordered to represent, from God his Master, the passion of His dear Son, as still fresh and still powerful for their eternal salvation. And to *God* it is an *altar*, whereon men mystically present to Him the same sacrifice, as still bleeding and suing for mercy."

Wesley left hymn-writing mostly to his gifted brother; but occasionally he tried his hand at it also. The following quaint hymn, so "strikingly descriptive of his own lot and experience," when he had transferred his chapels to trustees, and had no wife nor child, is believed to be his:—

"I have no babes to hold me here;
But children more securely dear
For mine I humbly claim;
Better than daughters or than sons,
Temples of living stones,
Inscribed with Jesu's name.

No foot of ground do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness;
A poor, wayfaring man,
I lodge awhile in tents below;
Or gladly wander to and fro,
Till I my Canaan gain.

I have no sharer of my heart,
To rob my Saviour of a part,
And desecrate the whole;[1]

[1] A pitiable mistake.

Only betrothed to Christ am I,
And wait His coming from the sky,
To wed my happy soul.

Nothing on earth I call my own,
A stranger to the world unknown,
I all their goods despise;
I trample on their own delight,
And seek a country out of sight,
A country in the skies."

In November (1746), Wesley for the first time published a volume of sermons. The book, entitled *Sermons on Several Occasions*, is the first of the *four volumes of sermons* which, with the *Notes on the New Testament*, were afterwards constituted the perpetual standard of Methodist theology. In the preface Wesley speaks of his mode of preparing his sermons; it is very beautiful—

"I sit down alone; only God is here. In His presence I read His book; for this end, to find the way to Heaven. Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? I lift up my heart to the Father of Lights, and ask Him to let me know His will. I then search after and consider parallel passages of Scripture. I meditate thereon with all the attention and earnestness of which my mind is capable. If any doubt still remains, I consult those who are experienced in the things of God, and then the writings whereby, being dead, they yet speak. And what I thus learn, that I teach."

Amongst other things, Wesley wrote a book of *Lessons for Children*, and in the preface for that he says:—

"Beware of that common but accursed way of making children parrots, instead of Christians. Regard not how much, but to how good purpose they read. Turn each sentence every way, propose it in every light, and question them continually on every point."

This is very good, and Wesley knew better how to teach children than how to train them, which was not surprising, as

he had none of his own, but was used to teaching the uneducated, who are truly "children of a larger growth."

In 1748 Wesley opened his new school at Kingswood; the other school, for the children of the miners, was not abolished, but still went on as a separate institution; but the new school was for children of a different class—the sons of travelling preachers (who had very little time to look after their families) and of those pious Methodists who wished them to receive a distinctly religious training. But, to our mind, several mistakes were made; one was in the stringent rule that no child was to be taken from the school by its parents, "no, not for a day, till they take him for good and all." The poor boys were thus completely sundered from their homes, and admitted into a system which was highly calculated to make them unreal and hypocritical. True, the boys went to bed at eight, but they were compelled to rise at four all the year round, and "spend the time till five in private reading, singing, meditating, and praying." When we add to this that every child, if healthy, was made to fast every Friday till three o'clock, it can easily be understood that religion thus enforced tended to disgust the poor children. Moreover, they were allowed to have no holidays, and no time allowed on any day for play, as Wesley thought, "he who plays when a child will play as a man;" and he forgot the sensible adage about "all work and no play."

Was it any wonder that Wesley often found the boys were either removed by their parents or had to be dismissed as incorrigible? No doubt, if he had had children of his own, his school regulations would have been very different.

Other institutions demanded much time and thought. As he had studied medicine during his Oxford career, he established a sort of medical dispensary in London, Bristol, and Newcastle, at a time when there was nothing of the sort; and he seems to have had no hesitation about prescribing himself for individuals. But we must remember that in those days

clergymen were often the medical advisers of their parishioners. Then, Wesley established a loan society, whereby poor and deserving Methodists might be assisted in times of need; and he took much thought and trouble about the education of his preachers. Most of these were ignorant, unlettered men, who had grasped the first principles of religion, and were of immense use in bringing them home to the hearts of the poor and ignorant, and, for a time, they knew as much as was required, but by-and-by it was evident that those who were converted by their preaching needed more teaching than they could bestow. Wesley perceived that his preachers must be trained to read and think, and he began to instruct some of them himself at the useful Newcastle Orphan-house. We find him corresponding with the eminent Dr. Doddridge about the choice of books for these students; and in his Journal he writes at Newcastle:—

"March 4.—This week I read over, with some young men, a compendium of rhetoric, and a system of ethics. I see not why a man of tolerable understanding may not learn in six months more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four (perhaps seven) years."

In the early part of 1749 John went to Wales to marry his brother Charles and Sarah Gwynne, the daughter of a Welsh gentleman. The bride was only twenty-three, whilst the bridegroom was forty; but the marriage was a very happy one in spite of this disparity of age.

Two days after the marriage Wesley set out for Ireland, and arrived on Sunday morning, April 16th, and on the same day preached three times to the Dublin Methodists.[1] He spent a fortnight there, and then started to the provincial societies. At Edinberry he had "an exceedingly well-behaved congregation," including "many Quakers," and took the appropriate text, "They shall be all taught of God." At Athlone a few of the officers and several of the soldiers of the regiment to which

[1] The members numbered 449.

Nelson had been attached were among his audience. Several sinners were converted, including a man who, for many years, had been "eminent for cursing, swearing, drinking, and all kinds of fashionable wickedness."

At Limerick Wesley preached to a very mixed congregation of about two thousand, "not one of whom either laughed, or looked about, or minded anything except the sermon." Here the society had taken a lease of an old abbey, and had turned it into a Methodist meeting-house. Wesley met a class of soldiers, eight of whom were Scotch Highlanders. "Most of these," he wrote in his Journal, "were brought up well; but evil communications had corrupted good manners. They all said from the time they entered into the army they had grown worse and worse. But God had now given them another call, and they knew the day of their visitation."

And a little later, "The more I converse with this people, the more I am amazed. That God hath wrought a great work among them is manifest; and yet the main of them, believers and unbelievers, are not able to give a rational account of the plainest principles of religion. It is plain God begins his work at the heart; then the inspiration of the Highest giveth understanding."

When returning by boat from Newtown to Limerick, a day or two after, Wesley had a narrow escape.

"After dinner," he wrote, "we took boat, in order to return. The wind was extremely high. We endeavoured to cross over to the leeward side of the river; but it was not possible. The boat being small and overloaded, was soon deep in water; the more so because it leaked much, and the waves dashed over us frequently. And there was no staying to empty it, all our men being obliged to row with all their strength. After they had toiled about an hour, the boat struck a rock, the point of which lay just under the water. It had four or five shocks, the wind driving us on, before we could get clear. But our

THE HIGHLANDERS AT LIMERICK KEEPING ORDER FOR JOHN WESLEY.

men wrought for life, and about six o'clock God brought us safe to Limerick."

After preaching at Mardyke, Wesley set out for Cork. His account of what happened on the way is interesting :—

"We breakfasted at Brough, nine miles from Limerick. When I went into the kitchen, first one or two, then more and more, of the neighbours gathered about me, listening to every word. I should soon have had a congregation, but I had no time to stay.

"A mile or two beyond Kilmallock (once a large and strong city, now a heap of ruins) we saw the body of a man lying dead in the highway, and many people standing and looking upon it. I stopped and spoke a few words; all listened attentively, and one who was on horseback rode on with us. We quickly fell into discourse; I soon perceived he was a priest, and found he was a sensible man. I gave him a book or two at parting, and he dismissed me with 'God bless you,' earnestly repeated twice or thrice.

"We stopped a while at Kildorrery in the afternoon, and took the opportunity of speaking closely to every one that understood English, and of giving them a few books. What a nation is this! every man, woman, and child (except a few of the great vulgar) not only patiently but gladly suffer the word of exhortation.

"Between six and seven we reached Rathearmuck. Mr. Lloyd read prayers and I preached. Even the Papists ventured to come to church for once, and were a very serious part of the congregation."

The next day Wesley preached at eleven, "and the hearts of the people seemed to be as melting wax."

"Our congregation in the evening was larger than ever," Wesley continues; "and never, since I came into this kingdom, was my soul so refreshed as it was both in praying for them, and in calling upon them to accept the redemption that is in Jesus."

Just as they were coming out of church a gentleman from Cork came up to Wesley and told him that it was impossible for him to preach there in that city, because of the riots that were taking place there. Wesley, however, went on, and he had no sooner entered Cork than "the streets and doors and windows were full of people." Prudently, instead of waiting until the mob had time to gather, Wesley rode on to Bandon, a town entirely inhabited by Protestants, where he had by far the largest congregation he had yet seen in Ireland. Rumours detrimental to the characters of the Wesleys and of the Methodists had penetrated there, and Wesley had an opportunity of refuting them.

After visiting Blarney and Brough, the indefatigable preacher returned to Limerick.

"Four comfortable days," says he, "I spent with this lively people, the like to whom I had not found in all the kingdom."

When he left there to go to Nenagh, "for want of better accommodation," he was glad to ride on horseback behind "an honest man" who overtook him as he trudged on foot. At Gloster he preached in the "stately saloon" of a large house. At Ferbane he found two inns did not care to entertain heretics; however, he tried a third, and was admitted, no questions being asked. At Athlone, towards the end of his sermon in the new chapel, he cried out, "Which of you will give yourself soul and body to God?"

Whereupon a Mrs. Glass responded with a cry that almost shook the house, "I will, I will." Two others followed her example, and the scene became most exciting. Many began to cry aloud for mercy. "But we continued wrestling with God in prayer," says Wesley, "till He gave us an answer of peace."

And so on and on Wesley went from place to place, until nine weeks had been taken up by this excursion. He then returned to England.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SAD CHAPTER.

JOHN WESLEY really was unfortunate in his love affairs! Perhaps he felt lonely after his brother's marriage had withdrawn the latter's affectionate sympathy in a measure from himself, or perhaps the news of Charles's happiness made him think of following his example. Anyway, he began to pay attentions to a certain young and attractive Methodist, named Grace Murray. She was of humble origin, and the widow of a sailor; and, after a striking conversion, she had devoted herself to a religious life in connection with the Newcastle Orphan House. Grace taught the scholars, visited the sick, and acted as leader in classes of women, occasionally making excursions for a similar purpose in the country around.

No doubt she was an estimable woman, and withal *very* amiable; for when Charles Wesley came over in a terrible way because his brother contemplated marrying her, she allowed him to persuade her to marry a certain John Bennet, a Methodist preacher, whom she had nursed through a fever which lasted twenty-six weeks, and who was so exceedingly in love with her that he did not scruple to marry her whilst she was still engaged to John Wesley.

But then John *had* been slow! He might have married her before, but he had waited to satisfy John Bennet—as if a man in love with her would ever be satisfied without her!—to procure his brother's consent, to send an account of his reasons for marrying to all his preachers and societies, and to desire their prayers.

When, therefore, Grace found that all the societies were in

an uproar at the idea of their leader marrying "that woman," and when Charles Wesley came over saying he would *never* consent, and John Bennet pleaded his cause in person, was it surprising that, in the absence of John Wesley, she yielded, and became Mrs. Bennet?

"The sons of Zerniah were too strong for me," wrote the forsaken lover in a letter. "The whole world fought against me; but, above all, my own familiar friend. Then was the word fulfilled, 'Son of man, behold I take from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke; yet shalt thou not lament, neither shall thy tears run down.' The fatal, irrevocable stroke was struck on Thursday last. Yesterday I saw my friend (that was) and him to whom she was sacrificed. 'But why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?'"

The venerable Vicar of Shoreham evidently feared that this interference of Charles's might lead to a breach between the brothers, and he wrote to Charles—

"Yours came this day to hand. I leave you to guess how such news must affect a person whose very soul is one with yours and our friend. Let me conjure you to soothe his sorrows. Pour nothing but oil and wine into his wounds. Indulge no views, no designs, but what tend to the glory of God, the promoting the kingdom of His dear Son, and the healing of our wounded friend. How would the Philistines rejoice could they hear that Saul and Jonathan were in danger from their own swords!"

Tyerman says that Wesley's fortitude was one of his greatest virtues; and certainly he showed it now, for he immediately began preaching again as indefatigably as ever. At a meeting of the select society at Newcastle, soon afterwards, he says, "Such a flame broke out as was never there before. We felt such a love to each other as we could not express; such a spirit of supplication, and such a glad acquiescence in all the providences of God, and confidence that He would withhold from us no good thing."

So Wesley continued his work, and travelled about in England and also Ireland, preaching often, and enduring many an unseemly attack with a steady bravery which would alone have made him a hero; and in this way fourteen months passed by.

Then he became acquainted with a Mrs. Vazeille, the widow of a London merchant, "who appeared," says Moore, "to be truly pious, and was very agreeable in her person and manners. She conformed to every company, whether of the rich or of the poor; and had a remarkable facility and propriety in addressing them concerning their true interests." But other biographers speak very differently of her, and say she was ignorant and ill-bred.

On February 2nd, 1751, Wesley made this entry in his Journal:—

"For many years I remained single, because I believed I could be more useful in a single than in a married state. And I praise God, who enabled me so to do. I now as fully believe that, in my present circumstance, I might be more useful in a married state."

He immediately told his brother the conclusion he had come to; for Charles wrote at the same date: "My brother told me he was *resolved to marry*. I was thunderstruck, and could only answer, he had given me the first blow, and his marriage would come like the *coup de grace*. Trusty Ned Perronet followed, and told me the person was Mrs. Vazeille! one of whom I had never had the least suspicion."

Charles Wesley, who seems to have been a good judge of character, did not like Mrs. Vazeille, and events proved that she was anything but a suitable wife for his brother.

Wesley consulted his friend, Mr. Perronet, about the expediency of his marrying, and, having received a favourable answer, proceeded to propose marriage to the widow.

Mrs. Vazeille accepted him, and about that time, just as he was making preparations to start on his annual preaching tour

to Newcastle and its vicinity, he slipped on the ice while crossing London Bridge, and with much difficulty proceeded to Seven Dials, where he preached. He attempted to preach at the Foundry at night; but his sprain becoming very painful, he was obliged to relinquish his purpose, and he at once removed to Threadneedle Street, where Mrs. Vazeille lived, and there spent the next seven days, "Partly," he says, "in prayer, reading, and *conversation*, and partly in writing a Hebrew grammar and lessons for children."

A week afterwards, Wesley was carried to the Foundry, and preached kneeling, not yet being able to stand; and on the next day his marriage took place. He was then forty-eight, and his bride was seven years younger.

As every one knows, their marriage was a most unhappy one. Dr. Whitehead says, "Had he [Wesley] searched the whole kingdom, he would hardly have found a woman more unsuitable in all possible respects." At any rate, if she had any really good qualities, they were soon swallowed up in the fierce passion of jealousy.

Dr. Southey says:—

"Had Mrs. Wesley been capable of understanding her husband's character, she could not possibly have been jealous; but the spirit of jealousy possessed her, and drove her to the most unwarrantable actions. . . . She frequently left his house, and upon his earnest entreaties returned again; till, after having thus disquieted twenty years of his life, as far as it was possible for any domestic vexations to disquiet a man whose life was passed in locomotion, she seized on part of his Journals, and many other papers, which were never restored, and departed, leaving word that she never intended to return. He simply states the case in his Journal, saying that he knew not what the cause had been; and he briefly adds—'*Non eam reliqui, non dimisi, non revocabo:* I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her.'"

Most of Wesley's biographers represent this separation as

final; but one points out that in the following year, 1772, she is mentioned in Wesley's Journal as travelling with him:—"Tuesday, June 30.—Calling at a little inn on the Moors, I spoke a few words to an old man there, as my wife did to the woman of the house; they both appeared to be deeply affected. Perhaps Providence sent us to this house for the sake of those two poor souls."

Southey says Mrs. Wesley died ten years after she left Wesley, on the occasion which has generally been considered final.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WESLEY IN MIDDLE AGE.

It is remarkable, considering how very much is recorded of Wesley during the twelve preceding years, that we hear very little of him from about the year 1751, when he resigned his fellowship of Lincoln College, to 1770—that is, during the prime of his life, between the ages of forty-eight and sixty-eight. His biographers, Dr. Whitehead and Mr. Watson, pass over this long space of nearly twenty years in a few pages; and though it is true a later biographer,[1] in his valuable *Life of Wesley*, gathers together many interesting facts and letters, which are well worth consideration by those who can obtain the book, yet there seems to us no reason why we should enter into particulars concerning those years of which his chief biographers have been silent. The reason of their silence is plain. In the twelve years between 1738 and 1750, Wesley was full of activity, planning and erecting a great edifice; his soul was undergoing great struggles and experiencing great changes, and he felt that the same work was to be wrought out in thousands of human beings. His every energy then was absorbed and concentrated upon the task that he had set himself, and every step of the way is recorded. But the twenty years which followed were filled with patient building up, maturing, and organising; and necessarily this quieter work did not attract so much attention. But Wesley worked on steadily, travelling from place to place, preaching,

[1] Tyerman.

prescribing, overlooking the societies, and reproving and exhorting his preachers. Again and again individuals among these disappointed his expectations, and had to be "laid aside"; others, and these were usually the more earnest, hard-working ones, wanted to have their own way too much, especially upon a matter which gave both the Wesleys much concern — they were often wanting to separate from the Church; their plea being that they wished to administer the sacraments themselves. It is very interesting to read the correspondence which passed between Wesley and his brother and one or two earnest-minded clergymen upon the subject. Over and over again Wesley wrote that he could not bring his mind to it, and his brother repeatedly urged him to make all his preachers sign the same agreement they had signed in the early days of Methodism—which agreement promised *not to separate* from the Church.[1]

Wesley did not want to separate; he loved the Church of England; but when he had to choose between her and his large band of lay-preachers he hesitated, and his conduct was sometimes inconsistent. Charles enlisted the services of the Rev. John Walker, a Church of England clergyman who had done a noble work in his parish at Truro, hundreds of his parishioners having been converted under his ministry. Between him and Wesley there was a most interesting correspondence about the matter. Mr. Walker wisely suggested that Wesley should exert himself in trying to bring his vast body of workers more directly within the Church, by having, or trying to have, the more able of his preachers ordained, and the others made Scripture-readers. But this, Wesley said, would not serve the purpose which he and they had in view—the ordained few would become curates in isolated parishes where the same round of duties and the loss of the stimulus of change would cause them to grow "dead" themselves, as also those to whom they preached; and the Scripture-readers

[1] See Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*.

might do zealous service for a time here and there, but if they were under no sympathetic religious governance themselves, they too might grow cold. That was Wesley's idea, and he who had fought so long against the irreligion of the clergy of that day was surely in a better position to judge of them than we are. Then Wesley thought that by the dismissal of preachers who were not attached to the Church as he and his brother were, he would cause them and many of their followers to separate. But "while we are with them," he wrote to Mr. Walker, "our advice has weight, and keeps them to the Church." Then, referring to a remark of Mr. Walker's, "And will it not be the same" [*i.e.*, will they not separate] "at your death?" he says touchingly, "I believe not; for I believe there will be no resentment in this case. *And the last advice of a dying friend is not likely to be soon forgotten.*"[1]

Still it often required all Charles's exertions to keep Wesley firm, when many besieged his ears with special pleading; and Wesley sometimes displayed a want of firmness, which grieved his brother much. For instance, when he found that one or two of his preachers had begun to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, he did not dismiss them from the society, he did not even prohibit them from doing so, but he talked seriously to them about it, and *advised* their not doing so any more. And this he states himself, when defending himself from the charge of persecuting his preachers.

In 1752 Wesley received an interesting letter from the Rev. Mr. Milner, who had been at Chester, and who wrote about the disposition of the Bishop towards the Methodists:—

"The Bishop," says he, "I was told, was exceeding angry at my late excursion into the North in your company. But I found his lordship in much better temper than I was led to expect by my brother Graves, who was so prudent that he would not go with one so obnoxious to the Bishop's displeasure, and all the storm of anger fell upon him. When he

[1] The italics are our own.

told me how he had been treated for speaking in your defence, I was fully persuaded all the bitterness was past, and so I accordingly found it. I told his lordship that God was with you of a truth; and he seemed pleased with the relation of the conversion of the barber at Bolton, and with your design of answering Taylor's book on *Original Sin.* I have made no secret of your manner of proceeding to any with whom I have conversed, since I had the happiness of being in your company; and to the Bishop I was very particular in telling him what an assembly of worshippers there is at Newcastle; how plainly the badge of Christianity—love—is there to be seen. When his lordship talked about order, I begged leave to observe that I had nowhere seen such a want of it as in his own cathedral; the preacher so miserably at a loss, that the children took notice of it; and the choristers so rude as to be talking and thrusting one another with their elbows. At last I told him there was need of some extraordinary messengers from God to call us back to the doctrines of the Reformation; for I did not know one of my brethren in Lancashire that would give the Church's definition of faith, and stand to it. And alas! I had sad experience of the same falling away in Cheshire; for one of his son's curates would not let me preach for him, because of that definition of faith."

In October 1753 Wesley fell ill in London, and before he had quite recovered he once or twice caught cold, and was soon threatened with rapid consumption. By medical advice he went to Lewisham. "Here," says Dr. Whitehead, "not knowing how it might please God to dispose of him, and wishing to prevent vile panegyric" in case of death, he wrote his epitaph, and gave orders that if any inscription were put on his tombstone, it should be this—

"HERE LIETH
THE BODY OF JOHN WESLEY,
A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE BURNING:
WHO DIED OF A CONSUMPTION IN THE FIFTY-FIRST YEAR
OF HIS AGE.
NOT LEAVING, AFTER HIS DEBTS ARE PAID,[1] TEN POUNDS
BEHIND HIM;
PRAYING,
'GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME AN UNPROFITABLE SERVANT!'"

However, he proved not to be so seriously ill as the physician feared, and on the first of January he returned to London, and the next day set out for the Hotwells, near Bristol, to drink the water. On the 6th he began writing notes on the New Testament—"A work," says he, "I should scarce ever have attempted had I not been so ill as not to be able to travel or preach, and yet so well as to be able to read and write."

After that he recovered, and proceeded with his usual work with unremitting diligence. Perhaps there is some truth in Dr. Whitehead's surmise that Wesley became more and more determined to be the sole governor, humanly speaking, of the large organisation he had raised up. To err is human, and every position of authority over a mass of people has its dangers. "It appears to me," says Dr. Whitehead, "that, after the first difference with his brother, who disappointed his intended marriage, he made up his mind not to suffer either a superior or an equal in these respects. From that time he seemed determined to be *aut Cæsar aut nihil.* Mr. Charles, perceiving his brother's determination, and finding that the preachers became more and more prejudiced against him, thought it most prudent to withdraw from the active situation he had hitherto held amongst them; reserving to himself, however, the right of speaking his mind freely to his brother

[1] He had been so often accused of making money for himself out of the societies.

in a friendly correspondence, on various occasions through the remaining part of his life."

Charles, therefore, seems to have stopped itinerating, and devoted his future life to a more settled sphere of labour, and the production of his beautiful hymns.

During the years that followed, Wesley's health and strength were wonderfully preserved, in spite of arduous labours in England, Scotland, and Ireland. "In October 1765," he writes, "I breakfasted with Mr. Whitefield, who seemed to be an old, old man, being fairly worn out in his Master's service, though he has hardly seen fifty years. And yet it pleases God that I, who am now in my sixty-third year, find no disorder, no weakness, no decay, no difference from what I was at five-and-twenty, only that I have fewer teeth and more grey hairs!" Soon after he adds, "Mr. Whitefield called upon me. He breathes nothing but peace and love. Bigotry cannot stand before him, but hides its head wherever he comes."

So the old friends were friends once more, and each of them was toiling hard for the souls of men, though each with such different ideas of the goodness and mercy of God.

"The world," says Dr. Whitehead, going out of his way to account for the very patent fact that Wesley was not faultless, "has seldom seen a man of strong powers of mind, of first-rate talents, who has not laboured under some peculiar weakness or mental infirmity, which men of little minds, capable only of observing defects, have frequently made the object of ridicule. Numerous instances might easily be produced, both among philosophers and divines. Mr. Wesley's chief weakness was a too great readiness to credit the testimony of others, when he believed them sincere, without duly considering whether they had sufficient ability and caution to form a true judgment of the things concerning which they bore testimony. In matters, therefore, which depended wholly on the evidence of other persons, he was often mistaken. Mr. Charles Wesley was in the

opposite extreme; full of caution and suspicion. But he was fully sensible both of his own and of his brother's weakness, and in the present year wrote to him as follows:—'When you fear the worst, your fears should be regarded; and when I hope the best, you may almost believe me.' And again, some years later—'Your defect of mistrust needs my excess to guard it. You cannot be taken by storm, but you may by surprise. We seem designed for each other. If we could and would be oftener together, it might be better for both. Let us be useful in our lives, and at our death not divided.'"

Wesley was in fact exceedingly credulous in many points, though in one or two he showed himself to be just the opposite; and, on the other hand, Charles was suspicious and cautious. We have seen that in the refusal of the latter to believe the *bonâ fide* character of the fits and violent displays of emotion which the preaching of John so often excited, whilst John's credulity at times is almost pitiable. His Journal abounds with the recitals of most extraordinary stories which his converts poured into his willing ears; and the biographer above-mentioned says—"Mr. Wesley easily believed most of the stories he heard concerning *witchcraft* and *apparitions*."

In the year 1769 Wesley sent a letter to many Church clergymen, who, he thought, believed and preached salvation by faith, asking them if it were not possible for them and him to agree cordially among themselves, and not hinder, but help one another; but of the fifty or sixty to whom he wrote only three vouchsafed him an answer, so he gave up his cherished hope of union. "They are a rope of sand," he wrote, "and such they will continue." And then he turned his attention to the subject of trying to make his preachers more united, urging them at the Conference in 1769 to resolve—"(1) *To devote ourselves entirely to God;* denying ourselves, taking up our Cross, steadily aiming at one thing, to save our own souls and them that hear us. (2) To preach *old Methodist doctrines* and no other, contained in the minutes of the conferences.

To observe and enforce the whole Methodist discipline, laid down in the said minutes."

When the business of the Conference was over, Wesley says, all the preachers were melted down while they were singing these lines for me—

> "Thou who so long hast saved me here,
> A little longer save;
> Till freed from sin, and freed from fear,
> I sink into a grave;
> Till glad I lay my body down,
> Thy servant's steps attend;
> And O! my life of mercies crown
> With a triumphant end."

A fine finish to one of Wesley's most important conferences.

Two preachers had gone over to America some time before, though perhaps not exactly sent by Wesley.[1] At this Conference, however, he sent two, named Boardman and Pilmoor, to preach and take charge of the societies in America, where Methodism soon began to flourish.

Wesley began the year 1770 with a covenant service in London, at which eighteen hundred Methodists were present. In this year Wesley was able to reckon forty-nine circuits in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and one hundred and twenty-two itinerant preachers, besides double the number of local preachers, who did not quit their usual avocations.

In the Conference this year Wesley's position and power were called in question, and the following minutes are very interesting :—

"*Q.* What power is this which you exercise over both the preachers and societies?

"*A.* 1. In November 1738, two or three persons, who desired to flee from the wrath to come, and then a few more, came to me in London, and desired me to advise and pray with them. I said, 'If you will meet me on Thursday night,

[1] Tyerman.

I will help you as well as I can.' More and more then desired to meet with them, till they were increased to many hundreds. The case was afterwards the same at Bristol, Kingswood, Newcastle, and many other parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It may be observed, the desire was on their part, not mine. My desire was to live and die in retirement. But I did not see that I could refuse them my help, and be guiltless before God.

"Here commenced my power—namely, a power to appoint when, and where, and how they should meet; and to remove those whose lives showed that they had not a desire to flee from the wrath to come. And this power remained the same, whether the people meeting together were twelve, or twelve hundred, or twelve thousand.

"2. In a few days some of them said, 'Sir, we will not sit under you for nothing; we will subscribe quarterly.' I said, 'I will have nothing; for I want nothing. My fellowship supplies me with all I want.' One replied, 'Nay, but you want an hundred and fifteen pounds to pay for the lease of the Foundry; and likewise a large sum of money to put it into repair.' On this consideration I suffered them to subscribe. And when the society met, I asked, 'Who will take the trouble of receiving this money, and paying it where it is needful?' One said, 'I will do it, and keep the account for you.' So here was the first steward. Afterwards, I desired one or two more to help me as stewards, and in process of time a greater number.

"Let it be remarked, it was I myself, not the people who chose these stewards, and appointed to each the distinct work wherein he was to help me as long as I desired. And herein I began to exercise another sort of power—namely, that of appointing and removing stewards.

"3. After a time a young man, named Thomas Maxfield, came and desired to help me as a son in the Gospel. Soon after came a second, Thomas Richards, and then a third,

Thomas Westall. These severally desired to serve me as sons, and to labour when and where I should direct. Observe—these likewise desired me, not I them; and I durst not refuse their assistance. And here commenced my power to acquaint each of these when and where and how to labour—that is, while he chose to continue with me; for each had a power to go away when he pleased, as I had also to go away from them, or any of them, if I saw sufficient cause. The case continued the same when the number of preachers increased. I had just the same power still to appoint when and where and how each should help me, and to tell any (if I saw cause), 'I do not desire your help any longer.' On these terms, and no other, we joined at first; on these we continued joined. But they do me no favour in being directed by me. It is true, my reward is with the Lord. But at present I have nothing from it but trouble and care, and often a burden I scarce know how to bear.

"4. In 1744 I wrote to several clergymen, and to all who then served me as sons in the Gospel, desiring them to meet me in London, and to give me their advice concerning the best method of carrying on the work of God. And when their number increased, so that it was not convenient to invite them all, for several years I wrote to those with whom I desired to confer, and they only met me at London, or elsewhere; till at length I gave a general permission, which I afterwards saw cause to retract.

"Observe—I myself sent for these of my own free choice. And I sent for them to advise, not to govern me. Neither did I at any time divest myself of any part of the power above described, which the providence of God had cast upon me, without any design or choice of mine.

"5. What is that power? It is a power of admitting into and excluding from the societies under my care; of choosing and removing stewards; of receiving or not receiving helpers; of appointing them when, where, and how to help me, and of desiring any of them to confer with me when I see good. And

as it was merely in obedience to the providence of God, and for the good of the people, that I at first accepted this power, which I never sought; so it is on the same consideration, not for profit, honour, or pleasure, that I use it at this day.

"6. But 'several gentlemen are offended at your having so much power.' I did not seek any part of it. But when it was come unawares, not daring to bury that talent, I used it to the best of my judgment. Yet I never was fond of it. I always did, and do now, bear it as my burden—the burden which God lays upon me, and therefore I dare not lay it down.

"But if you can tell me any one, or any five men, to whom I may transfer this burden, who can and will do just what I do now, I will heartily thank both them and you."

Thus ably did Wesley vindicate his having this extraordinary power. It is interesting to see what Alexander Knox writes about Wesley's love of it:—

"That Mr. Wesley's natural feelings were gratified by the progress of his society cannot be questioned; nor that, with the partiality of a parent, he was liable to palliate its imperfections, and to over-estimate its good effects. I grant, too, that in governing the body which he had formed, he experienced much of that pleasure which every one feels in exercising those talents wherein he excels. But I am persuaded that these necessary and useful movements of our nature never existed in any human being with less alloy of selfishness than in John Wesley. It is true that he appeared unwilling, even to the last, to part with the power which had grown up in his hands, or to suffer others to share in it. But I affirm with confidence that it was not love of power which made him thus tenacious of it. I am assured that, for his own sake, he no more valued it than the earth on which he trod. But he regarded it as a providential deposit, which he had not a right to part with. He knew that none of those around him were fit to be his coadjutors, and that so long as he could hold his place, the welfare of his society required that he should hold it alone."

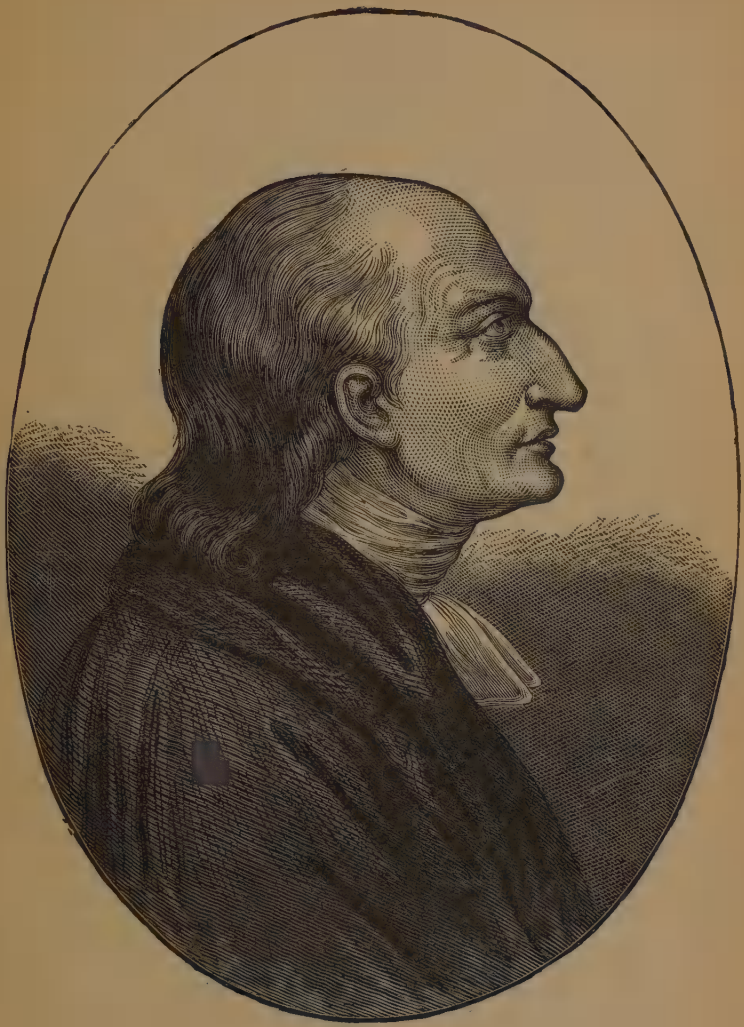
CHAPTER XXXVII.

TWO OF WESLEY'S HELPERS AND FRIENDS.

Of the few clergymen who entered into Wesley's views, and heartily co-operated with him, Mr. Fletcher was, says Southey, the most remarkable for intellectual powers; and, on the other hand, the one who entered most entirely into the affairs of the society was Thomas Coke. We will therefore briefly mention the careers of these good and well-known men.

John Guillaume de la Flechere[1] was born at Nyon, in the Pays de Vaud, of a Bernese family, descended from a noble house in Savoy. He was educated for the ministry at Geneva, but finding himself unable to subscribe to the doctrine of Predestination, he resolved to seek preferment as a soldier of fortune. He therefore went to Lisbon, where he obtained a commission in the Portuguese service, and was ordered to Brazil. An accident, however, which confined him to bed when the ship sailed, prevented his going there, and on his recovery he left Portugal for active service in the Low Countries; but, peace being established, there was no scope for his energies in that direction, and so he came over to England, and eventually became tutor in the family of Mr. Hill, of Fern Hall, in Shropshire. "The love of God and man abounded in his heart," and as he found among the Methodists the sympathy which he desired, he joined them, and for a time took to ascetic courses, of which he afterwards acknowledged the error. He lived, we are told, on vegetables, and then for a while on milk and water and bread; he sat up two whole nights in every week to pray and read and meditate on religious things, and

[1] Southey.



REV. JOHN FLETCHER.

on the other nights did not allow himself any sleep so long as he could keep his attention on his books.

At last, by the advice of his friends, Mr. Hill and Mr. Wesley, he took orders in the English Church. The ordination took place in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, and as soon as it was over he went to the Methodist Chapel in West Street, where he assisted in administering the Lord's Supper. Wesley found the assistance most seasonable.

"How wonderful are the ways of God!" he wrote in his Journal. "When my bodily strength failed, and none in England were able and willing to assist me, He sent me help from the mountains of Switzerland, and an helpmate for me in every respect. Where could I have found such another?"

Mr. Fletcher (as he now called himself, being completely Anglicised) incurred much odium by the way in which he proceeded to identify himself with the Methodists. But by Mr. Hill's means he was presented to the Vicarage of Madely, in Shropshire, about three years after his ordination. Madely was a populous village, in which were extensive collieries and ironworks. Mr. Fletcher had been a curate there, and so was acquainted with the wickedness which abounded amongst the crowded population, and he entered upon his ministry with great zeal, devoting the whole of the rents of his small estate in the Pays de Vaud to charitable purposes. When some of his remoter parishioners excused themselves for not attending the morning service because they did not wake early enough to get their families ready, he set out every Sunday—for some months—at five o'clock, with a bell in his hand, and went round to the most distant parts of the parish to call up the people. And wherever a congregation could be collected within ten or fifteen miles on week-days, there he went to preach to it, though he seldom got home before one or two in the morning. At first his lowest and worst parishioners resented the way in which he ventured to burst in upon their revels to reprove and exhort them.

One day a mob of colliers, who were baiting a bull, made up their minds to pull him off his horse as he went to preach, set the dogs upon him, and, in their own words, "bait the parson"; but, fortunately, the bull broke loose before his arrival, and dispersed them all.

Fletcher, however, won upon his parishioners, rude and brutal though they were, by his gentle manners and exceeding benevolence and holy life, until at length his church was crowded to excess.

In 1768 Lady Huntingdon appointed Mr. Fletcher to the presidency of her Theological School at Trevecca, which appointment[1] he held in addition to his living at Madely. Mr. Benson, the head-master of the school, says that on the occasion of his visits he was received as if he had been an "angel of God." When he addressed the students, they were soon "all in tears, and every heart caught fire from the flame that burned in his soul."

At the close of the addresses he would say, "As many of you as are athirst for the fulness of the Spirit of God, follow me into my room."

Many usually hastened there, and it is said to have been "like the holiest of holies," two or three hours being "spent in such prevailing prayer as seemed to bring Heaven down to earth."

"Indeed," says Benson, "I frequently thought while attending to his heavenly discourse and divine spirit, that he was so different from and superior to the generality of mankind, as to look more like Moses or Elijah, or some prophet or apostle come again from the dead, than a mortal man dwelling in a house of clay!"

Now it happened that Lady Huntingdon was greatly disturbed by some doctrinal views against Predestination and Calvinism, set forth by her old friend Wesley in the minutes of his Conference in 1770, and, lest danger should accrue

[1] We are told that he received no pay for these duties.

therefrom to the students at Trevecca, she resolved to test the soundness of her pupils and teachers by ordering all to quit the college who did not disavow Wesley's theology.

Fletcher immediately resigned his post, and Professor Benson was dismissed. The latter said, "I have been discharged wholly and solely because I did not believe the doctrine of absolute predestination."

Fletcher also upheld the doctrine of "Christian perfection," which Wesley preached, and he maintained, during years of controversy with Calvinists and those who favoured "antinomianism," the spirit of a gentleman and a Christian.

In 1771 Mr. Fletcher married Mary Bosanquet, a devoted Christian, who had suffered the loss of home and friends for the sake of her religion. But the life of Mrs. Fletcher is too well known to need repeating here. We will only add she was herself a very successful preacher, and so excellent was her influence that Wesley was forced to admit that for *this* woman to speak in the congregation, provided she did not "intrude into the pulpit," was manifestly no shame at all, but only an exception to the general rule, such as St. Paul himself allowed at Corinth.

On the 14th of August 1785, Fletcher died of consumption, but his devoted wife carried on much of his work for thirty years longer.

Wesley's appreciation of the great virtues of this saintly man is shown by the fact that he wished very much to make him his successor.

In 1770 Wesley was urged to go to America, where several societies had now been formed, and he had a strong inclination to do so, for, although more than sixty-six years of age, his bodily health was, he said, even better than when he was twenty-five. But he could not fail to be aware that if he left the United Kingdom the great bulk of the Methodists would fall into confusion; besides, many would be certain to oppose such a hazardous resolution. For the sake of the Methodists

at home, therefore, he refused to go to those in America; but the request seems to have caused him to think more and more of appointing a successor, and we find him in 1773 writing to Mr. Fletcher from Shoreham, where lived his friend Mr. Perronet, whom he had doubtless consulted on the subject:—

"DEAR SIR,—What an amazing work has God wrought in these kingdoms, in less than forty years! And it not only continues, but increases throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland; nay, it has lately spread into New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina. But the wise men of the world say, 'When Mr. Wesley drops, then all this is at an end!' And so it surely will, unless, before God calls him hence, one is found to stand in his place. For 'It is not good that the supreme power should be lodged in many hands; let there be one chief governor.' I see more and more, unless there be one 'who presides over the rest,' the work can never be carried on. The body of the preachers are not united; nor will any part of them submit to the rest; so that either there must be one to preside over all, or the work will indeed come to an end.

"But who is sufficient for these things? Qualified to preside both over the preachers and people? He must be a man of faith and love, and one that has a single eye to the advancement of the kingdom of God. He must have a clear understanding; a knowledge of men and things, particularly of the Methodist doctrine and discipline; a ready utterance; diligence and activity, with a tolerable share of health. There must be added to these, favour with the people, with the *Methodists* in general. For unless God turn their eyes and their hearts towards him, he will be quite incapable of the work. He must likewise have some degree of learning; because there are many adversaries, learned as well as unlearned, whose mouths must be stopped. But this cannot be done unless he be able to meet them on their own ground.

"But has God provided one so qualified? Who is he?

Thou art the man! God has given you a measure of loving faith; and a single eye to His glory. He has given you some knowledge of men and things; particularly of the whole plan of *Methodism*. You are blessed with some health, activity, and diligence; together with a degree of learning. And to all these, He has lately added, by a way none could have foreseen, favour both with the preachers and the whole people. Come out in the name of God! Come to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Come while I am alive and capable of labour—

> "'Dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat, et pedibus me
> Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo.'[1]

Come while I am able, God assisting, to build you up in faith, to ripen your gifts, and to introduce you to the people. *Nil tanti*, what possible employment can you have, which is of so great importance?

"But you will naturally say, 'I am not equal to the task; I have neither grace nor gifts for such an employment.' You say true; it is certain you have not, and who has? But do you not know Him who is able to give them? Perhaps not at once, but rather day by day; as each is, so shall your strength be. 'But this implies,' you may say, 'a thousand crosses, such as I feel I am not able to bear.' You are not able to bear them *now*, and they are not *now* come. Whenever they do come, will He not send them in due number, weight, and measure? And will they not all be for your profit, that you may be a partaker of His holiness?

"Without conferring therefore with flesh and blood, come and strengthen the hands, comfort the heart, and share the labour of your affectionate friend and brother,

"JOHN WESLEY."

This was a warm and pressing invitation to a position which was even reverenced by many of the Methodists, and it must

[1] "While Lachesis has some thread of life to spin, and I walk on my own feet without the help of a staff."—JUVEN., *Sat.* iii.

THE THREE FRIENDS.

have been very gratifying to Fletcher, coming as it did from Wesley, whom he respected, admired, and loved. But Fletcher knew how difficult was the work even for Wesley, and that the preachers were constantly jealous of each other, and had determined not to be under the control of any one man after Wesley's death. "He therefore," as Dr. Whitehead quaintly puts it, "determined not to launch his little bark on so tempestuous an ocean."

And, as we have seen, he died many years before Wesley, whose health and strength continued wonderfully good. In June 1774, when the latter entered on his seventy-second year, he speaks thus of himself: "This being my birthday, the first day of my seventy-second year, I was considering, how is this that I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago? That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer than they were then? That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth? The grand *cause* is, the good pleasure of God, who doth whatsoever pleaseth Him. The chief means are:—1. My constantly rising at four, for about fifty years. 2. My generally preaching at five in the morning, one of the most healthy exercises in the world. 3. My never travelling less, by sea or land, than four thousand five hundred miles in a year."

In the year 1776, Wesley came into Somersetshire in the course of his itinerancy, and there he met for the first time with the afterwards celebrated Dr. Coke. In his Journal the meeting is mentioned thus:—

"Here I found a clergyman, Dr. Coke, late a gentleman commoner of Jesus College, in Oxford, who came twenty miles on purpose to meet me. I had much conversation with him; and a union then began which, I trust, shall never end."

Thomas Coke, Doctor of Divinity, was small of stature, like John and Charles Wesley. "These three little men," it has

been said, "made a great change in the moral world: John Wesley, the founder of one of the largest Churches in Christendom; Charles Wesley, the world-renowned Christian poet; and Thomas Coke, the great founder of modern missions."

Thomas Coke was born at Brecknock in the year 1747, and was the only child of respectable and wealthy parents. His father died during his childhood, and in his seventeenth year he was entered as a gentleman commoner at Jesus College, Oxford. Whilst at the University, he contracted a taint of that philosophical infidelity which was then beginning to infect half-learned men.[1] However, the works of Bishop Sherlock reclaimed the young man, and he entered into Holy Orders; and, being in expectation of some considerable preferment, took out his degree of Doctor of Laws. As he was possessed of a fair income, it was not of much consequence to him that those persons in power to whom he looked for patronage disappointed his expectations. Having accepted the curacy of South Petherton, in Somersetshire, he entered upon the duties of his office with more than ordinary zeal. His preaching soon filled the church, where, feeling the need of more room, he erected, as the fashion then was, a gallery at his own expense. This and the style of his preaching raised a suspicion that he was inclined to Methodism. The growing inclination was strengthened by conversation with Maxfield, who happened then to be residing in the neighbourhood, and the perusal of Alleine's *Alarm to the Unconverted* deepened the impression.

Dr. Coke now preached extemporaneously, established evening lectures, and introduced hymns into the church, and by doing this excited a strong spirit of opposition. Complaints against him were made to the Bishop and the Rector. The former merely admonished him, but by the latter he was dismissed, in a manner which seems to have been studiously

[1] Southey.

disrespectful, before the people on the Sunday, and his enemies were so rude as to ring the bell when he left the church. His Welsh blood being roused, the young clergyman took his stand near the church on the two following Sundays, and preached to the people as they came out, "for the purpose of vindicating himself, gratifying his adherents, and exhorting his opponents to repentance." The last-named individuals were so provoked at this, that they collected stones for the purpose of pelting him, on his second exhibition; and the Doctor would hardly have escaped, without some serious injury, if a young lady and her brother, whom the people knew and respected, had not come forward and stood on each side of him. Soon afterwards Dr. Coke seized the opportunity of being introduced to Wesley, and immediately became a member of the Methodist Society, and was soon looked upon as one of the most able of Wesley's fellow-labourers. As "he gave himself up to the work of the Connexion," says Southey, "the second place in it was naturally assigned to him; no other of its active members was possessed of equal fortune and rank in society; and all that he had, his fortune to every shilling, and his life to every minute that could be employed in active exertions, were devoted to its interests. He was now considered as Mr. Wesley's more immediate representative; and instead of being stationed, like the other preachers, in a circuit, he travelled, like Mr. Wesley, as a general inspector wherever his presence was thought needful. In Ireland, more particularly, he visited the societies alternately with Mr. Wesley, so that an annual visitation was always made."

Another biographer of Wesley remarks what a remarkable coincidence it was, that in the very year the health of Fletcher failed Wesley formed the acquaintance of Coke; and it must have seemed to the great leader of the Methodists as if, when disappointed of one, Providence had raised him up another coadjutor, and it might be successor. He seems therefore to have considered him more, and yielded more to his influence

than to that of any one else. But Coke, though he became so great and useful, was a very different man from Fletcher, and it is a matter for regret that Wesley listened so often to his counsels, because, if his zeal was unquestionable, his judgment was not always to be relied on.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WESLEY'S ORDINATIONS.

We have seen that Wesley loved the Church of England, and made many attempts to prevent the growing tendency of his followers to secede from her, and that in 1761 he had sent a circular-letter to fifty clergymen asking them if it would not be possible for them to agree together, or, in other words, to be united, but to this letter he only received three replies. A little earlier in that year he met "several serious clergymen" for the same object, but also in vain.

We find this entry in his Journal about the same time: "I arrived at Wardale just in time to prevent them turning Dissenters, which they were on the point of doing;" and in 1766, at Bingley, "I preached with a heavy heart, finding so many of the Methodists here, as well as at Haworth, perverted by the Anabaptists. I see clearer and clearer none will keep to us unless they keep to the Church. Whoever separates from the Church will separate from the Methodists."

And in 1767 he writes: "I rode to Yarmouth, and found the society had entirely left the Church. I judged it needful to speak largely upon that head. They stood reproved, and resolved, one and all, to go to it again."

In the following year he wrote a letter to a clergyman who reflected upon the Methodists for calling themselves members of the Church while they had their meeting-house licensed for Dissenters.[1] The Methodists, said Wesley, had always refused to be called Dissenters when applying to be licensed, and their being called Dissenters in the certificates did not make them

[1] J. Wedgewood.

so. The Act of Toleration indeed refused to recognise any building in which were held other religious meetings than the stated services of the Church as anything else than a Dissenters' meeting-house.

When Wesley was in his full vigour of mind, at the age of sixty-five, he wrote:—"We are in truth so far from being enemies to the Church, that we are rather bigots to it. I dare not, like Mr. Venn, leave the parish church where I am to go to an independent meeting. I advise all over whom I have any influence to keep to the Church."

"It is certain, then," says Wedgewood, "that Wesley's attachment to the Church did not wear out; and had she recognised him as her servant, and received the Order founded by him within her boundaries, the probability is that he would have been the means of reconquering for her all the ground she had lost in the preceding century, and bringing over into a strenuous and perhaps bigoted devotion to her doctrine and liturgy no small proportion of the nation." And the same writer goes on to say that, in spite of all the opposition he met with from the chief men in the Church, if his Order had been confined to English soil, it is not probable that he would ever have proceeded to the acts which must be considered as definite separation from the Church of England.

If the scarcity of clerical help troubled Wesley in England, where there were so few Methodist clergymen to administer the Sacraments to his people, and where so often other clergymen refused to give the Lord's Supper to the poor Methodists, much more was the difficulty felt in America. In 1777 the preachers in the different circuits there were forty in number, and the societies, too, had greatly increased. These were established in towns and settlements so distant that the preachers had to be constantly travelling long journeys to visit them. Prominent among these good men was the zealous Mr. Asbury, who closely followed Wesley's example in devotedness to the service of God. Now it happened that,

because of the war and the acquisition of independence by the States, most of the clergy of the Church of England had left the country; and thus there was no one to baptise the children of the Methodists, nor to administer the Holy Communion. There was no bishop at all in the United States, so that the preachers, even if they wished, could not apply for ordination unless they crossed the Atlantic. A division took place among the societies, some of them wishing to be formed into a regular Church, and some, with Mr. Asbury, being opposed to such a secession. A statement of the greatness of the work, and the division that had taken place, together with the facts that thousands of their children were unbaptised, and the members of the societies in general had not partaken of the Lord's Supper for many years, was drawn up, and sent to Wesley for his consideration.

Asbury urged Wesley to go over; that, as we have seen, the latter felt to be impossible. He was then over eighty years old, and in wonderful health and strength; but he knew it would be fatal to the Methodist cause in England if he went. In this emergency he thought of Coke, and accordingly asked him to go; and at the Conference soon afterwards it was decided that Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey were to be sent out. Six days afterwards Coke wrote to Wesley, asking him to ordain him—I suppose as a sort of bishop—that when he arrived in America he might proceed to ordain other clergymen.

Then, doubtless, Wesley's thoughts reverted to what passed in his mind nearly forty years before, when he read Lord King's book, and reflected upon the meaning he there attached to the word presbyter, and what he surmised were the ancient powers of that office. The wishes, the longings so often suppressed, so often struggled with and fought against, that there might be some other means of ordaining clergymen without the sanction of those prelates who shook their heads at Methodism and would have nothing to do with its

beneficent work, doubtless returned in overwhelming force upon the old man's mind, which, although stronger than that of most men at his age, might well be weaker than it had been—so he consented. Some I know have contradicted this view of the case. Tyerman contends that for nearly forty years Wesley had believed he had a right to ordain other clergymen; but why, if Wesley believed it right to do so before, did not he "lay his hands" on other men, and thus ordain them? The need for clerical assistance had long been very great; why should he leave what he thought would be such a useful work until he was eighty-one years old? For the sake of the love he bore the Church of England? Yes; but we have long seen his love for Methodism was even greater than his love of her. Charles's influence had had much to do with keeping him from that step before, it is true, and now when Wesley consented to ordain these men, his brother was not acquainted with the matter until after the deed had been done. Poor Charles! the news *was a heavy blow to him!*

"After our having continued friends for seventy years, and fellow-labourers for above fifty," he wrote to Dr. Chandler, "can anything but death part us? I can scarcely believe it, that in his eighty-second year my brother, my old intimate friend and companion, should have assumed the Episcopal character, ordained elders, consecrated a bishop, and sent him to ordain our lay-preachers in America. . . . How was he surprised into so rash an action? . . . Lord Mansfield told me last year that ordination was separation. This my brother does not, nor will not see, or that he has renounced the principles and practice of his whole life. Thus our partnership is dissolved, but not our friendship. I have taken him for better or for worse till death do us part, or rather reunite us in love unspeakable. I have lived a little too long that have lived to see this evil day." He then went on to speak of the new Bishop Seabury, whose ordination was recognised by the

Church of England, and who was ready to ordain any of the Methodist preachers, and ends sadly, "But what are the poor Methodists now? Only a new sect of Presbyterians!"

And to his brother he writes mournfully:—"Alas! what trouble are you preparing for yourself, as well as for me and for your oldest, truest, best friends! Before you have quite broken down the bridge, stop and consider. Go to your grave in peace, or at least suffer me to go before this ruin. So much I think you owe to my father, my brother, and to me, as to stay till I am taken from the evil. I am on the brink of the grave. Do not push me in, or embitter my last moments. . . . This letter is a debt to our parents, and to our brothers as well as to you."

How full of the pathos of a tender spirit which has, when enfeebled by age, sustained a grievous shock, is this letter! and how we sympathise with Charles, who once wrote that he would have left the Methodists and his brothers years ago if he had not known that his influence restrained his brother from taking such a step as this! And now, after all his trouble for years, the very thing he had striven so hard to prevent had happened! John had taken upon himself to ordain, and not to ordain a mere clergyman, but a bishop, who was to continue the schism by ordaining others.

"Perhaps," admits Wesley, in his rather lame reply to his brother's letter, "if you had kept nearer to me I might have done better."

Charles's answer shows that in his extreme old age he loved the brother who had pained him so deeply as tenderly as ever, and the Church which had been so cold a mother to him.[1]

"I do not understand," he writes, "what obedience to bishops you dread; they have let us alone to act just as we please for fifty years. At present some of them are quite friendly to us, particularly to you. The churches are all open to you, and never could there be less pretence for a separation.

[1] Wedgewood.

If I could prove your separation, I would not. But do you not allow that the Doctor has separated? Do you not know and approve his avowed design to get all the Methodists in the three kingdoms into a separate body, a new Episcopal Church of his own? You ask, 'What are you frightened at?' At the approaching schism, as causeless and unprovoked as the American rebellion; at your own eternal disgrace, and all those frightful evils which your own reasons describe. . . . I thank you for your intention of remaining my friend. Herein my heart is as your heart. Whom God hath joined let not man put asunder. We have taken each other for better or worse, till death do us—part?—no, but unite eternally."

Wesley details a part of his reasons for his conduct in the affair in the letter-testimonial which Dr. Coke carried over with him to the American Conference. It is addressed, "To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in *North America*," and is as follows:—

"By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America are totally disjoined from their mother-country, and erected into independent States. The *English* Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the States of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation some thousands of the inhabitants of these States desire my advice, and in compliance with their desire I have drawn up a little sketch.

"Lord King's account of the Primitive Church convinced me many years ago that Bishops and Presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned from time to time to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused; not only for peace sake, but because

I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national Church to which I belonged.

"But the case is widely different between England and *North America.* Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers; so that for some hundred miles together there is none either to baptise or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here therefore my scruples are at an end, and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's rights, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

"I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint *Superintendents* over our brethren in *North America;* as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as *Elders* among them, by baptising and administering the Lord's Supper. And I have prepared a Liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England (I think the best-constituted Church in the world), which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the Elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

"If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

"It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for *America.* But to this I object —1. I desired the Bishop of *London* to ordain only one; but could not prevail.—2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay.—3. If they would ordain them *now,* they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us?—4. As our *American* brethren are now totally disentangled from the State, and from the English Hierarchy, we dare not

entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church. And we judge it best, that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free. "JOHN WESLEY."

"Before we proceed any further," says Dr. Whitehead, after transcribing for us this letter in his *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, "let us pause a moment and inquire how far the general position laid down in this letter as the ground of Mr. Wesley's proceedings, agrees with his practice of ordination. He tells us, 'Lord King's account of the Primitive Church convinced me many years ago that Bishops and Presbyters are the *same order*, and consequently have the same right to ordain.' But if this were even admitted, would it justify Mr. Wesley's practice on this occasion? I apprehend not. Let us suppose that Mr. Wesley was as good an ἐπίσκοπος as any in Europe, and Dr. Coke a regular Presbyter; the position states that they had the *same right* to ordain. According to this principle, then, Dr. Coke had the same right to ordain Mr. Wesley, that Mr. Wesley had to ordain Dr. Coke! and consequently the Doctor's ordination was null and void to all intents and purposes: or if the Doctor received any right to ordain others, which he had not before, and which the very ceremony of ordination implies, then Mr. Wesley's general position as the ground of his practice is not true. Thus we see that Mr. Wesley's principle and practice in this affair directly oppose each other. If his principle was true, his practice was bad; if his practice was good, his principle was false; they cannot both stand good together. It is painful to see him fall into such a *dilemma*, which we have not seen before in the whole course of his life. When he began the practice of ordaining to the ministry, his brother, Mr. *Charles*, exclaimed—

"'Twas age that made the breach, not he.' And if we add to this the influence others had over him in this affair, it is perhaps the best apology that can be made for his conduct."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WESLEY'S LAST DAYS.

WESLEY'S mind was set at rest in the last years of his life about his successor, for in the same year as that in which he held his first ordination, 1784, he acted upon a suggestion of his brother's, and caused the future government of the society to devolve, not upon one, but upon many whom he esteemed "the worthiest," for age, experience, talent, and moderation.

The instrument by which this settlement was effected was called "A Deed of Declaration," and by it one hundred preachers, mentioned by name, were declared to be "The Conference of the People called Methodists."

"By means of this deed,[1] a legal description was given to the term Conference, and the settlement of the chapels upon trustees was provided for; so that the appointment of preachers to officiate in them should be vested in the Conference, as it had heretofore been in Mr. Wesley. The deed also declares how the succession and identity of the yearly Conference is to be continued, and contains various regulations as to the choice of a president and secretary, the filling up of vacancies, expulsions, etc. Thus 'the succession,' as it was called in Mr. Charles Wesley's letter, was provided for; and the Conference, with its president, chosen annually, came into the place of the Founder of the Connexion, and has so continued to the present day. As the whole of the preachers were not included in the deed, and a few who thought themselves equally entitled to be of the hundred preachers who thus formed the legal Conference were excepted, some dissatisfaction arose; but as all the

[1] Watson.

preachers were eligible to be introduced into that body as vacancies occurred, this feeling was but partial and soon subsided. All the preachers in full connection were also allowed to vote in the Conference; and subsequently those who were not of the hundred, but who had been in connection a certain number of years, were permitted by their votes to put the president into nomination for the confirmation of the legal conference. Thus all reasonable ground for mistrust and jealousy was removed from the body of the preachers at large; and with respect to the hundred preachers themselves, the president being chosen annually, and each being eligible to that honour, efficiency of administration was wisely connected with equality."

Dr. Whitehead, differing from other biographers of Wesley, was of opinion that this deed was not designed by Wesley, but that he was urged to sign it, and afterwards repented of having done so.

But whatever errors of judgment Wesley fell into in his latter days, the fact remains that he carried on his hard work with undiminished zeal at a time when most men, if still living, enjoy the repose which is so much needed in the evening of life.

"Leisure and I," he said once, when in the prime of life, "have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged to me."

"Lord, let me not live to be useless," he said once, after seeing one who had been known as an active and useful magistrate, reduced by age to be alike feeble in mind and body.

"Wesley," says a biographer, speaking of his old age, "still continued to be the same marvellous old man. No one who saw him, even casually, in his old age, could easily forget his venerable appearance. His face was remarkably fine; his complexion fresh to the last week of his life; his eye quick and keen and active. When you met him in the street of a crowded city, he attracted notice, not only by his band and cassock, and his long hair, white and bright as silver, but by his pace and

manner, both indicating that all his minutes were numbered, and that not one was to be lost. 'Though I am always in haste,' he says of himself, 'I am never in a hurry; because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with calmness of spirit. It is true I travel four or five thousand miles in a year; but I generally travel alone in my carriage,[1] and consequently am as retired ten hours a day as if I were in a wilderness. On other days I never spend less than three hours (frequently ten or twelve) in the day alone. So there are few persons who spend so many hours secluded from all company.' Thus it was that he found time to read much, and write voluminously. After his eightieth year, he went twice to Holland, a country in which Methodism, as Quakerism had done before it, met with a certain degree of success. Upon completing his eighty-second year, he says, 'Is anything too hard for God? It is now eleven years since I have felt any such thing as weariness. Many times I speak till my voice fails, and I can speak no longer. Frequently I walk till my strength fails, and I can walk no farther; yet, even then, I feel no sensation of weariness, but am perfectly easy from head to foot. I dare not impute this to natural causes. It is the will of God.' A year afterwards he says, 'I am a wonder to myself; I am never tired (such is the goodness of God) either with writing, preaching, or travelling. One natural cause, undoubtedly, is my continual exercise and change of air. How the latter contributes to health I know not, but certainly it does.'"

The learned Dr. Johnson very much enjoyed Wesley's society. He was very intimate with Wesley's clever sister, Mrs. Hall, and he is said to have requested her to procure him an interview with her brother. Mrs. Hall did so, and a day was appointed for him to dine with the Doctor at his residence at Salisbury Court. Dr. Johnson fixed the dinner-hour at two, to

[1] In his sixty-ninth year his friends persuaded him to give up riding, and drive instead.

suit Wesley's hours, but it happened that the dinner was not ready till three. They conversed till that time; but Wesley had only set apart two hours to spend with his learned host, and so, as soon as dinner was ended, he rose from the table

WESLEY AND DR. JOHNSON.

and departed. The Doctor felt extremely disappointed, and could not conceal his mortification.

"Why, Doctor," said Mrs. Hall, "my brother has been with you two hours." He replied, "Two hours, madam! I could talk all day, and all night too, with your brother."

Boswell, too, the biographer of Johnson, says the Doctor observed to him, "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have his talk out as I do."

Wesley and Howard, the prison philanthropist, very much admired each other. Howard called upon Wesley in Ireland in 1785. Wesley, after that visit, declared him "to be one of the greatest men in Europe," adding, "nothing but the power of God can enable him to go through his difficult and dangerous employments."

And Howard said of Wesley, "I was encouraged by him to go on vigorously with my own designs. I saw in him how much a single man might achieve by zeal and perseverance; and I thought why may I not do as much in my way as Mr. Wesley in his, if I am only as assiduous and persevering? And I am determined to pursue my work with more alacrity than ever."

Howard had heard Wesley preach years before on "Whatever thy hand findeth to do," etc., and the sermon had made a powerful impression on his mind, and greatly influenced his conduct.[1]

"In the biography of Crabbe,[1] his son gives a brief scene in the last days of John Wesley. At Lowestoft, one evening, all adjourned to a dissenting chapel to hear the venerable John Wesley, then on one of the latter of his peregrinations. He was exceedingly old and infirm, and was attended and almost supported in the pulpit by a young minister on each side. The chapel was crowded to suffocation.

"In the course of his sermon Mr. Wesley repeated, though with an application of his own, the lines from Anacreon—

> "'Oft am I by woman told,
> Poor Anacreon! thou grow'st old.

[1] *Anecdotes of the Wesleys.*

See, thine hairs are falling all;
Poor Anacreon! how they fall!
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told,
'Tis time *to live* if I grow old.'

"My father was much struck by his reverend appearance, his cheerful air, and the beautiful cadence he gave to those lines. After the service he was introduced to the patriarch, who received him with benevolent politeness."

Once, as the old man was going to mount into his pulpit, he found a little child had perched herself upon the pulpit steps, and as he lifted her out of his way he kissed her; and we are told that simple loving action melted the heart of a papist who had come to hear him preach, and led to his conversion.

The children loved Wesley, and crowded round him in the streets, longing to have a touch of his kind hand, or a smile from his benevolent face.

In his eighty-fourth year he began to feel decay; and upon commencing his eighty-fifth, he writes:—

"I am not so agile as I was in times past; I do not run or walk so fast as I did. My sight is a little decayed. My left eye is grown dim, and hardly serves me to read. I have daily some pain in the ball of my right eye, as also in my right temple (occasioned by a blow received some months since), and in my right shoulder and arm, which I impute partly to a sprain and partly to the rheumatism. I find likewise some decay in my memory with regard to names and things lately past; but not at all with regard to what I have read or heard twenty, forty, or sixty years ago. Neither do I find decay in my hearing, smell, taste, or appetite (though I want but a third part of the food I did once), nor do I feel any such thing as weariness, either in travelling or preaching. And I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons,

which I do as readily, and, I believe, as correctly as ever. Even now, though I find pain daily in my eye, temple, or arm, yet it is never violent, and seldom lasts many minutes at a time.

"Whether or not this is sent to give me warning that I am shortly to quit this tabernacle, I do not know; but, be it one way or the other, I have only to say—

> "My remnant of days,
> I'll spend to His praise,
> Who died the whole world to redeem;
> Be they many or few,
> My days are His due,
> And they all are devoted to Him!"

In 1788 Wesley lost his brother Charles, who for so many years had been his zealous coadjutor, and always his faithful and affectionate friend. And though they had differed much in their opinions latterly, that had not affected their intense love for one another.

Charles had attained to his eightieth year, but he had been a valetudinarian through the greater part of his life; in consequence, it was believed, of having injured his constitution by close application and excessive abstinence at Oxford. He had always dreaded the act of dying, and his prayer was that the Almighty would give him patience and an easy death. His wish was granted; the powers of life being worn out, without any disease, he fell asleep. He had desired that he might not be buried in his brother's burying-ground, because it was not consecrated, and so he was interred in the churchyard of Marylebone, the parish in which he dwelt; and his pall was supported by eight clergymen of the Church of England.

It was not Wesley's way to tell the deep sorrows of his heart; but he deeply felt his brother's death. A fortnight afterwards, when at Bolton, he attempted to give out, as his

second hymn, the one beginning with the words, "Come, O Thou traveller unknown," but when he came to the lines—

> "My company before is gone,
> And I am left alone with Thee,"

the bereaved old man sunk beneath his uncontrollable emotion, burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and hid his face in his hands. The singing ceased, and a very touching scene ensued, for the crowded congregation sympathised keenly with their aged minister. At length, recovering himself, Wesley rose again, and went through a service which was never forgotten by those who were present.

The following is the quaint obituary published in the Conference minutes:—

"Mr. Charles Wesley, who, after spending fourscore years, with much sorrow and pain, quietly retired into Abraham's bosom. He had no disease; but after a gradual decay of some months,

> 'The weary wheels of life stood still at last.'

His least praise was his talent for poetry; although Dr. Watts did not scruple to say that that single poem, 'Wrestling Jacob,' was worth all the verses he himself had written."

It was reported that Charles had said his brother would not outlive him more than a year, and he may well have said it, for John was indeed drawing near to the grave. His Journal contains touching references to his failing powers. Upon his eighty-sixth birthday, he says:—

"I now find I grow old. My sight is decayed, so that I cannot read a small print, unless in a strong light. My strength is decayed, so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. My memory of names, whether of persons or places, is decayed, till I stop a little to recollect them. What I should be afraid of is, if I took thought for the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind, and

create either stubbornness, by the decrease of my understanding, or peevishness, by the increase of bodily infirmities. But Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God!"

In the year 1788 he published a volume entitled the *Sunday Service of the Methodists*, which was in reality an altered edition of the Prayer-book of the Church of England. Many of the alterations were such as in his younger and more capable days he would never have thought of making, and they would have deeply grieved his more consistent brother, so opposed are they to the whole spirit of the Church of England. And yet in the minutes of the Conference for that year it is recorded:—

"The sum of a long conversation was that, in a course of fifty years, we had neither premeditately nor willingly varied from it in one article, either of doctrine or of discipline; (2) That we were not yet conscious of varying from it in any point of doctrine."

Wesley's strength was now so greatly diminished that he found it difficult to preach more than twice a day; and for many weeks he abstained from his five o'clock morning sermons, because a slow and settled fever parched his mouth. Finding himself a little better, he resumed the practice, and hoped to hold on a little longer, but in the beginning of the year 1790, he writes:—

"I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much. . . . However, blessed be God! I do not slack my labours. I can preach and write still."

In June he wrote the following letter to a Bishop, whose name has not been published:—

"My Lord,—It may seem strange that one who is not acquainted with your lordship should trouble you with a letter. But I am constrained to do it; I believe it is my duty both to God and your lordship. And I must speak plain, having nothing to hope or fear in this world, which I am on the point of leaving.

"The Methodists in general, my lord, are members of the Church of England. They hold all her doctrines, attend her service, and partake of her sacraments. They do not willingly do harm to any one, but do what good they can to all. To encourage each other herein, they frequently spend an hour together in prayer and mutual exhortation. Permit me then to ask, 'Cui bona? for what reasonable end would your lordship drive these people out of the Church?' Your lordship does, and that in the most cruel manner; yea, and the most disingenuous manner. They desire a licence to worship God after their own conscience. Your lordship refuses it, and then punishes them for not having a licence! So your lordship leaves them only this alternative, 'Leave the Church or starve.' And is it a Christian, yea a Protestant bishop, that so persecutes his own flock? I say *persecutes;* for it is persecution, to all intents and purposes. You do not burn them, indeed, but you starve them, and how small is the difference! And your lordship does this under colour of a vile, execrable law, not a whit better than that *de hæretico comburendo!* So persecution, which is banished out of France, is again countenanced in England!

"O my lord, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for pity's sake, suffer the poor people to enjoy their religious as well as civil liberty! I am on the brink of eternity! Perhaps so is your lordship too! How soon may you also be called to give an account of your stewardship to the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! May He enable both you and me to do it with joy! So prays, my lord, your lordship's dutiful son and servant,

"JOHN WESLEY."

What has been called Wesley's dying manifesto on separation from the Established Church appeared in the number of the *Methodist Magazine* for April 1790.

After stating that, next to the Primitive Church, he had from childhood esteemed the Church of England as the most

scriptural, national Church in the world, and had, therefore, not only assented to all the doctrines, but observed all the rubric in the liturgy, and that with all possible exactness, even at the peril of his life; he goes on to give a history of the rise of Methodism, and of his own *irregularities*, and ends thus :—

"I never had any design of separating from the Church. I have no such design now. I do not believe the Methodists in general design it, when I am no more seen. I do, and will do, all that is in my power to prevent such an event. Nevertheless, in spite of all that I can do, many of them will separate from it (although I am apt to think not one-half, perhaps not one-third of them). These will be so bold and injudicious as to form a separate party. In flat opposition to these, I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."

To the same effect was his sermon on "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron," which was written at Cork in May 1789, and published in his magazine twelve months afterwards. In it he maintains that in ancient times the offices of priest and preacher were quite distinct.

"Priests were not preachers; and preachers, or prophets, were not priests. He argues that in the New Testament the office of an evangelist is not the same as that of a pastor. Pastors presided over the flock, and administered the sacraments; evangelists helped them and preached the word."[1] After asserting that the same distinction is recognised in the English, Presbyterian, and Roman Churches, he comes to Methodism, and tells his readers that Methodist itinerant preachers are evangelists, not pastors, and that their work is solely to preach, not to administer sacraments. His address to them is worth quoting :—

"God has commissioned you to call sinners to repentance;

[1] Tyerman.

but it does by no means follow from hence that ye are commissioned to baptise or to administer the Lord's Supper. Ye never dreamt of this for ten or twenty years after ye began to preach. Ye did not then, like *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, seek the priesthood also.* Ye knew 'No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' O contain yourself within your own bounds. Be content with preaching the Gospel. Do the work of evangelists. I earnestly advise you, abide in your place; keep your own station. Ye were, fifty years ago,—those of you that were then Methodist preachers,—*extraordinary messengers* of God, not going in your own will, but *thrust out*, not to supersede, but to *provoke to jealousy the ordinary messengers.* In God's name, stop there! Both by your preaching and example provoke them to love and good works. . . . Be Church of England men still. Do not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon you, and frustrate the design of Providence, the very end for which God raised you up."

Then, trying to vindicate himself from the charge of inconsistency, he says, "The generality of people naturally think, 'I am inconsistent.' And they cannot but think, unless they observe my two principles—the one, that I dare not separate from the Church, that I believe it would be a sin so to do; the other, that I believe it would be a sin not to vary from it in the points above mentioned. I say, put these two principles together, first, I will not *separate* from the Church; yet, secondly, in cases of necessity, I will *vary* from it; and inconsistency vanishes away. I have been true to my convictions from 1730 to this day."

We give the words as we find them, and will only remark that the aged man could not then see the inconsistency between his precepts and his practice in his old age.

On the 28th of June 1790, he wrote in his Journal:—

"This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age—

my eyes did not wax dim; neither was my natural strength abated. But last August I found almost a sudden change; my eyes were so dim that no glasses could help me. My strength also now quite forsook me, and probably will not return in this world, but I feel no pain from head to foot; only it seems nature is exhausted, and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till

'The weary springs of life stand still at last.'"

Henry Crabbe Robinson heard him preach in his old age, and thus describes the scene:—

"It was, I believe, in October 1790, that I heard John Wesley in the great round meeting-house at Colchester. He stood in a wide pulpit, and on each side of him stood a minister, and the two held him up, having their hands under his armpits. His feeble voice was barely audible, but his reverend countenance, especially his long white locks, formed a picture never to be forgotten. There was a vast crowd of lovers and admirers. It was for the most part a pantomime, but the pantomime went to the heart. Of the kind, I never saw anything comparable to it in after-life."

And in a letter, dated October 18th, 1790, the same narrator says—

"I felt great satisfaction last week in hearing that veteran in the service of God, the Rev. John Wesley. At another time, and not knowing the man, I should almost have ridiculed his figure. Far from it now. I looked upon him with a respect bordering upon enthusiasm. After the people had sung one verse of a hymn, he arose and said: 'It gives me a great pleasure to find that you have not lost your singing; neither men nor women. You have not forgotten a single note. And I hope by the assistance of God, which enables you to sing well, you may do all other things well.' A universal 'Amen' followed. At the end of every head or division of his sermon, he finished by a kind of prayer,

a momentary wish, as it were, not consisting of more than three or four words, which was always followed by a universal buzz. His discourse was short. The text I could not hear. After a long prayer, he rose up and addressed the people on liberality of sentiment, and spoke much against refusing to join with any congregation on account of difference in opinion."

CHAPTER XL.

WESLEY'S DEATH.

WESLEY'S last sermon was preached on February 23rd, 1791, at Leatherhead (eighteen miles from London), in a magistrate's dining-room, from the text, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

Two days afterwards, when he was brought home to City Road, he went upstairs, and asked that for half-an-hour he should be left alone. When the time expired, Joseph Bradford found him so ill that he sent for Dr. Whitehead.

"Doctor," said the dying patriarch, "they are more afraid than hurt."

The next day he slept a great deal, and was very drowsy. On the following morning (Sunday) he seemed better, got up, sat in his chair, looking cheerful, and repeated from one of his brother's hymns—

> "Till glad I lay this body down,
> Thy servant, Lord, attend;
> And oh! my life of mercy crown
> With a triumphant end!"

And then, soon after, with marked emphasis, he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." His niece, Miss Wesley, and Miss Ritchie prayed with him. "When at Bristol," said he, in allusion to his visit there in 1753, "my words were—

> 'I the chief of sinners am,
> But Jesus died for me!'"

"Is that your language now?" asked Miss Ritchie.

"Yes," he replied; "Christ is all! He is all!" He then

Room in which WESLEY died

dozed, and sometimes his mind wandered, and then he was always preaching or meeting classes.

Most of the next day he slept, but once he was heard saying in a low, distinct voice—

"There is no way into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus." Then, referring to the text, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich," etc., he remarked, "That is the foundation, the only foundation, and there is no other."

His friends began to fear that he was beginning to sleep his last sleep, and Joseph Bradford, who was devoted to him, despatched notes to the preachers in the following terms:—

"*February 27th*, 1791.

"DEAR BROTHER,—Mr. Wesley is very ill: pray! pray! pray!

"I am, your affectionate brother,

"JOSEPH BRADFORD."

But Wesley's work was ended. On Tuesday, March 1st, after a restless night, some one asked him if he suffered pain, to which he replied in the negative, and began singing—

"All glory to God in the sky,
And peace upon earth be restored!
O Jesus, exalted on high,
Appear our omnipotent Lord.
Who meanly in Bethlehem born,
Didst stoop to redeem a lost race,
Once more to Thy people return,
And reign in Thy kingdom of grace."

At the end of the second verse he lay still, as if to recover breath.

"I want to write," said he.

A pen was put into his hand and paper was placed before him, but he could not do it; his hand had lost its cunning.

"I cannot," said the dying man.

"Let me write for you!" said Miss Ritchie. "Tell me what you wish to say."

"Nothing," was the reply, "but that God is with us."

"I will get up," said he; and whilst they arranged his clothes, he broke out singing in a manner which astonished all who were about him—

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures.

Happy the man whose hopes rely
On Israel's God; He made the sky,
And earth and seas, with all their train;
His truth for ever stands secure,
He saves the oppressed, He feeds the poor,
And none shall find His promise vain."

Once more seated in his chair, he said in a weak voice: "Lord, Thou givest strength to those who can speak and to those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest tongues."

And then he sang—

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree."

Here his voice failed. After gasping for breath he said, "Now, we have done all."

He was then laid on the bed from whence he rose no more.[1] After resting a little, he called to those who were with him to "Pray and praise." Soon after he said, "Let me be buried in nothing but what is woollen, and let my corpse be carried in my coffin into the chapel."

[1] Whitehead's *Life of the Rev. John Wesley.*

Again calling upon them to pray and praise, he took each by the hand, and, affectionately saluting them, bade them farewell.

After attempting to say something which they could not understand, he paused a little, and then, with all the remaining strength he had, said—

"The best of all is, God is with us."

And again, lifting his hand, he repeated the same words in holy triumph—

"The best of all is, God is with us."

Being told that his brother's widow had come, he said, "He giveth His servants rest;" thanked her as she pressed his hand, and affectionately tried to kiss her.

After they had moistened his lips he repeated his usual grace after a meal—"We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all Thy mercies; bless the Church and King, grant us truth and peace, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord."

And, after a little pause, "The clouds drop fatness. The Lord is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." He then called to them to pray, and seemed to join fervently in their petitions.

Most of the following night he repeatedly tried to repeat the hymn he had sung, but could only say, "I'll praise, I'll praise."

On Wednesday morning his end was near. Joseph Bradford prayed with him about ten o'clock in the morning, whilst eleven friends knelt round the bed.

"Farewell," said the dying man; and it was the last word he spoke.

Immediately after, without a groan or a sigh, he passed away. His friends stood round his bed and sang—

"Waiting to receive thy spirit,
Lo! the Saviour stands above;
Shows the purchase of His merit,
Reaches out the crown of love."

DEATH-BED OF JOHN WESLEY.

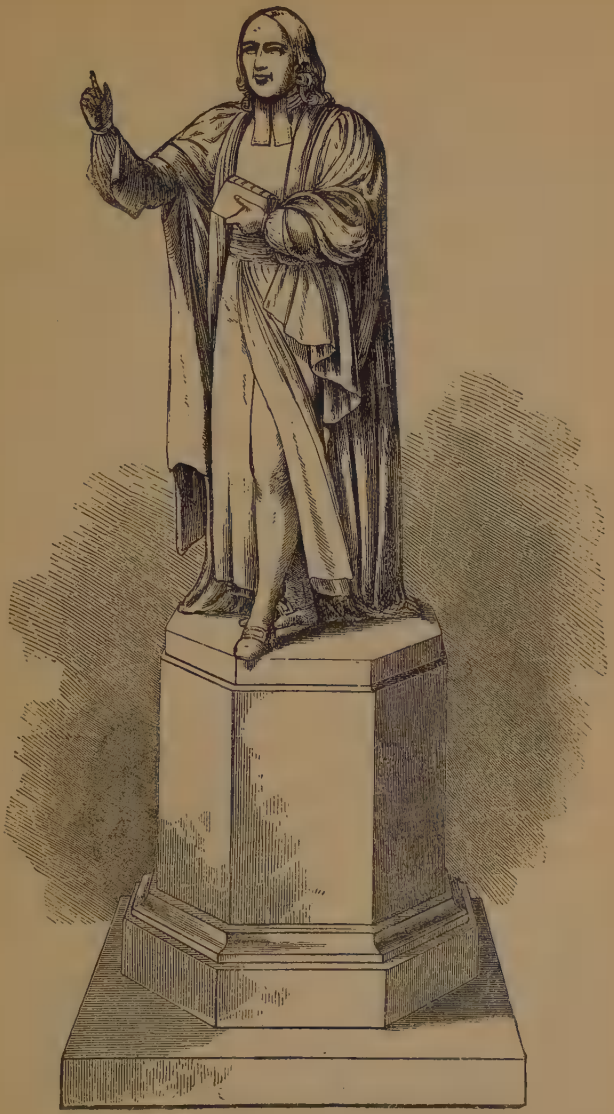
From the Painting by M. Claxton.]

It was on March 2nd, 1791, that Wesley died, and he was in the eighty-eighth year of his life, and had been sixty-five years "in the ministry."

His remains were interred behind the Chapel in City Road, on the 9th of March. So great was the excitement about his death, that, in order to prevent too great a crowd, it was arranged just at the last that the funeral should take place at five o'clock in the morning. Even then hundreds attended, and the burial must have been a very solemn and imposing sight.

The following inscription was put upon Wesley's tomb :—

"TO THE MEMORY OF
THE VENERABLE JOHN WESLEY, A.M.,
LATE FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD.
THIS GREAT LIGHT AROSE
(BY THE SINGULAR PROVIDENCE OF GOD)
TO ENLIGHTEN THESE NATIONS,
AND TO REVIVE, ENFORCE, AND DEFEND,
THE PURE, APOSTOLICAL DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES OF
THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH :
WHICH HE CONTINUED TO DO, BY HIS WRITINGS AND HIS LABOURS,
FOR MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY ;
AND TO HIS INEXPRESSIBLE JOY,
NOT ONLY BEHELD THEIR INFLUENCE EXTENDING,
AND THEIR EFFICACY WITNESSED,
IN THE HEARTS AND LIVES OF MANY THOUSANDS,
AS WELL IN THE WESTERN WORLD AS IN THESE KINGDOMS ;
BUT ALSO, FAR ABOVE ALL HUMAN POWER OR EXPECTATION,
LIVED TO SEE PROVISION MADE BY THE SINGULAR GRACE OF GOD,
FOR THEIR CONTINUANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT,
TO THE JOY OF FUTURE GENERATIONS!
READER, IF THOU ART CONSTRAINED TO BLESS THE INSTRUMENT,
GIVE GOD THE GLORY.
AFTER HAVING LANGUISHED A FEW DAYS, HE, AT LENGTH,
FINISHED HIS COURSE AND HIS LIFE TOGETHER ; GLORIOUSLY
TRIUMPHING OVER DEATH, MARCH 2, AN. DOM. 1791, IN THE
EIGHTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF HIS AGE."



WESLEY'S MONUMENT.

A marble tablet, bearing a well-executed group in relief, and also medallion portraits of John and Charles Wesley, has now been (very properly) placed in the south aisle of Westminster Abbey. And so, as Tyerman aptly says:—

"Thus the wheel turns round. One hundred and thirty years ago, Wesley was shut out of every church in England; now marble medallion profiles of himself and his brother, accompanied with suitable inscriptions, are deemed deserving of a niche in England's grandest cathedral. The man who, a century ago, was the best-abused man in the British Isles, is now hardly ever mentioned but with affectionate respect. . . ."

And the judgment of Southey is tacitly confirmed:—

"I consider Wesley as the most influential mind of the last century,—the man who will have produced the greatest effects centuries, or perhaps millenniums hence, if the present race of men should continue so long."

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